

564 Havik subdivisions. Similarly, Poleyā is a blanket term for anyone of the following Untouchable sub-castes, Kembatti, Aḍiyas, Pāleyā, Poleyā, Kukka Poleyā, Baḍaga Poleyā, and Māḍiga. Pāleyas are split into further subdivisions.

791  
793 The Brahmins, Kaṇiyas, and Baṇṇas (or Paṇikas) are the three  
• [778] castes with whom Coorgs come into contact mostly in ritual contexts. The Brahmins are priests not only in the great shrines at  
[788] Tala Kāvēri, Bhāgamandla, and Iṛpu, but also in numerous small temples scattered all over Coorg. Coorgs from every part of Coorg go on pilgrimage to the great shrines, and at Bhāgamandla, where the Kāvēri and Kanaké meet, it is customary for them to offer balls of rice to their ancestors under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

793 In those villages where a Brahmin is functioning as priest he is  
437 paid annually, at harvest time, a certain quantity of paddy by every house in the village. In this respect he is treated like the barber, washerman, smith, and others. The priest is an essential member of the village organization.

In addition to being priest of the village temple, the Brahmin performs certain ritual services for Coorgs. These services vary from one part of Coorg to another, and not infrequently from one joint family to another: Coorgs in Kiggaṭṇāḍ, for instance, are more Sanskritized in their ways than Coorgs elsewhere, and again some Coorg families are more Sanskritized than their neighbours. But everywhere the Brahmin priests perform certain minimum duties: at *putri*, the harvest festival of Coorgs, he comes with consecrated water which he gives the members to drink, and also sprinkles a little of it on certain parts of the house. When a wedding takes place in a Coorg house, he comes to bless the bridal pair and give them consecrated water.

564 The formation and crystallization of the division of Amma  
793 Coorgs is itself an acknowledgement of the strength of the influence  
754 of the Brahmins on Coorgs. But the Brahmins do not always operate at the Sanskritic level. Nearly a hundred years ago Dr. Moegling wrote that Coorgs were greatly afraid of the Tantri Brahmins of South Canara.

The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say that if one of the Tantri Brahmins be offended and curse a man he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of the masters of the black art to say to a man, 'do you

not see?' or 'do you not hear?' and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness or even death.<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally temples dedicated to Bhagavati or Bhadrakālī were under the control of Tantri Brahmins in South Canara. The latter had the right to appoint the priest and oracle to each of these temples: the priest was a Brahmin while the oracle belonged to any high caste like Coorgs.

The Tantri Brahmins knew the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple and consecration of images. They visited the temples under their management once every few years when their Coorg followers made money-offerings to them. Moegling tells us that a single such visit would yield the priests between Rs 200 and Rs 300, a substantial sum in those days, and which testifies to the hold exercised by the Tantri Brahmins over Coorgs.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that the Tantris sanctioned the institution of oracles at their temples shows the extent to which they had compromised with non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation:

Some Coorg is also chosen as a subject for possession by Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be instituted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a large number of candidates presented by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some *mantra* and puts some holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.<sup>3</sup>

The Kaniyas are another caste with whom Coorgs come into intimate contact in ritual contexts. They are astrologers and magicians from Malabar who have settled in Coorg for a long time, and their hold on Coorgs was very much greater in the past than it is today.

Every important task must be begun in an auspicious moment, or it will fail. Only the Kaniya knows the auspicious and inauspicious moments, and this is revealed to him by his knowledge of astrology. The first ploughing of the rice-fields, the first sowing, and the cutting of the sheaves have all to be performed during auspicious periods. A wedding has to be performed on an auspicious day and at an auspicious hour, and if there are horoscopes for the boy and girl, they are examined to find out if they are mutually

<sup>1</sup> Coorg Memoirs, pp. 56-57.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., pp. 56-57.

<sup>3</sup> Moegling, op. cit., pp. 56-57.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE

49

888 instance of Kaiyandira Appayya who saved the honour of his *nāḍ* and its temple by defeating and killing the fighter Kullachenda Chondu. A grateful *nāḍ* decreed that none, not even elders to Appayya, may address him by name. He was not permitted to salute an elder by touching the latter's feet. He was also prohibited from doing a number of things which ordinary Coorgs did, as, for instance, wearing the black Coorg gown (only the white gown is sacred), ploughing, and eating bamboo-shoots.

7% 828 At the harvest festival the astrologer may choose a young boy to perform the rite of cutting the sheaves. Such a boy is put into a position of ritual respect till the festival is over. He wears a white gown and he may not be touched till he has brought the severed sheaves home. Further, he is not permitted to salute an elder till the ritual is over. In other words the accordance of extreme respect to him necessitates the endowment of seniority for the duration of the ritual.

## VIII

5% 1047 The Coorg *okka* seems to be stronger and more sharply structured than the joint family elsewhere in south India, with the possible exception of the matrilineal *tarwāḍ* of the Nāyars, and the patrilineal *illam* of the Nambūdris. Every *okka* has an ancestral house (*ain mané*) built on the ancestral estate. Formerly, most of the members of the *okka* lived in the ancestral house, but nowadays only one or two segments inhabit it, while the rest are scattered all over Coorg and, occasionally, all over India. All the members of the *okka* gather together only on certain occasions, such as the marriage or death of a member, the harvest festival, the festival of the local village-deity, and the periodical ancestor-propitiation.

5% 769 778 The ancestral house and estate are accorded respect, and it is usual to have ancestor-shrines (*kaimaḍa*) or ancestor-platforms (*kāraṇava taré*) near the ancestral house. Coorgs, even those who are living away from the ancestral house, have some attachment towards it, and this expresses itself in having marriages and ancestor-propitiations performed there in preference to anywhere else. 764 Also, a Coorg prefers to be buried after death in his ancestral burial-ground which is a corner of the ancestral estate used for disposal of the dead members of the *okka*.

342 596 The ancestral house is usually a substantial building of stone and

342 mortar, with solid, carved woodwork. Masons and carpenters  
 596 from Malabar build them, and Coorg ancestral houses consequently resemble greatly the houses of well-to-do Nāyars. The house is usually situated on an elevation, and a narrow, high-walled and winding lane (*ḍu*) leads up to it. From the windows in the upper story one usually obtains a fine view of the surrounding  
 [628] country. Formerly, in the days when feuds, or *kuḍupi* (*kuḍippaka* in Malayālam), between joint families were common, and a surprise raid (*haḷḷa paḍe*) from a hostile *okka* was always a possibility, anyone coming with unfriendly intentions exposed himself to view from the windows of the ancestral house. The house was built like a fortress and was able to stand a siege for several days.

596  
 423 The ancestral estate usually includes an extent of jungle, some  
 [33] grazing land, and valleys in which rice is grown. The jungle provided the household with the necessary timber and fuel. A  
 [744] part of the jungle is reserved for burying or cremating the dead members of the *okka*. There is a kitchen-garden near the main  
 [351] building. A well or pond provides water for domestic purposes.

• [178] Every house includes an ancestor-shrine or ancestor-platform. Uncarved stones, representing cobra-deities, are planted on platforms built around the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. There may also be other uncarved stones representing minor deities like Pūda and Guḷika.

596 According to Lewis Rice,<sup>1</sup> in the seventies of the last century the Coorg *okka* frequently consisted of twenty or thirty, and occasionally even fifty members, all residing under one roof. He further tells us that previous to the invasion of Coorg by Tippu Sultan in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon to find in a house thirty or forty adult male relatives living together. Many *okkas* seem to have had 120 to 150 people, all living in the ancestral house.

Nowadays the *okka* commonly consists of two or three generations of agnatically-related males, their wives, and their children.  
 [591] Girls born in the *okka* go out on marriage as residence is patrilocal, but it sometimes happens that a woman remains unmarried for a variety of reasons. In such a case she stays in her natal *okka*. An  
 596 *okka* also includes the widow of a deceased member. As mentioned  
 587 earlier, leviratic unions are preferred amongst Coorgs, and a widow

<sup>1</sup> *Mysore and Coorg*, Bangalore, 1878, vol. iii, p. 329.

623 they are today. They controlled the public conduct of a Coorg very  
 681 thoroughly. The principal sanctions at the disposal of the assembly  
 were *poḷṭvāḍu* or fine, and *poramaḍi* or excommunication. There was  
 a regular scale of fines laying down the maximum that could be  
 levied on an individual, and on an entire *okka*, village, or *nāḍ*. The  
 maximum fine on a village headman guilty of an offence was very  
 much higher than the maximum for an ordinary individual, and  
 similarly, the maximum for a *nāḍ*-headman was higher than that for  
 a village-headman.

[689] Fines are levied for minor offences such as failure to attend a com-  
 munal dance or hunt, or to observe the requisite food restrictions  
 during the festival of a village-deity. Failure to pay the fine resulted  
 in the guilty person being excommunicated from the village. He  
 was not permitted to attend the village-assembly or a communal  
 dance or hunt. He was not allowed to enter the village temple or  
 take part in the festival of the village-deity,<sup>1</sup> but he was allowed to  
 remain in any house in which he had a right to stay, such as his natal  
 house, or his wife's natal house. The guilty person could resume  
 his normal social status after he had paid the fine, half of which  
 went to the village temple and the other half to the elders who  
 levied the fine.

688 Serious offences were punished by the offender's being ex-  
 558 communicated from caste. Such a punishment was usually for a  
 prescribed period, during which the offender was not entitled to  
 stay or dine even in his natal house. Not only was he prohibited  
 from attending a dance or hunt, but he was also prohibited from  
 going into any house in the village. The barber was not allowed to  
 shave him, the washerman was not allowed to wash his clothes, and  
 similarly artisan castes could not make anything for him. Even his  
 cattle were not allowed to graze on the common pasture.

783 After the prescribed period of punishment was over, the offender  
 778 had to go on a pilgrimage to Bhāgamandla where the river Kanaké  
 joins the Kāvēri. He had to have his head and faced shaved, and  
 bathe in the sin-cleansing waters of the sacred Kāvēri. He then  
 went to the temple of Bhagandēshwara for worship, and this was  
 followed by a visit to the source of the River Kāvēri, which is  
 probably the most sacred spot in Coorg. He bathed in the bigger of  
 783 the two springs and worshipped the smaller spring. He then

<sup>1</sup> A person polluted by the occurrence of a birth or death suffers from similar disabilities.

THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

73

Four Coorgs beat the small Coorg drum called 'duḍi' and sing some traditional songs at various points during *mangala*. These songs give an account of the ritual that is being performed. The singers also sing the 'road song' (*baṭṭe pāṭ*), while conducting the subject of *mangala* from one part of the house to another, and the road song gives a traditionally exaggerated account of everything that is found *en route*. At night, after dinner, Coorg singers sing songs about the groom, bride, their ancestors, and the guests who are present. [796] [533]

The elaborate preparations for *mangala* and the selection of an auspicious day for its performance stress the social importance of the occasion. *Mangala* indicates the movement of the subject from one position in the social structure to another, it marks a change in his social personality. *Mūrta* ritual is the most important part of *mangala*, and, consequently, it is performed during the most auspicious part of the auspicious day, and the subject undergoes a series of preparatory and purificatory rites before sitting down for *mūrta*.

The subject of *mangala*, if male, is ritually shaved by the barber, after which he is given a bath by three women relatives whose husbands are alive.<sup>1</sup> Women whose husbands are alive enjoy a higher ritual and social status than widows. Only an unmarried girl, and a woman whose first and only husband is alive, are entitled to take part in auspicious ritual. Not only widows, but also remarried widows, are excluded from auspicious ritual, but such exclusion is not as thorough among Coorgs as it is, for instance, among the Brahmins. [783] [589]

After a bath, the subject wears ritual garments, and proceeds to the sacred central hall (*nellakki naḍubāḍe*), where all ritual ought to take place, ideally speaking. In the central hall is the sacred tripod stool (*mukkāli* = three-legged) on which the subject sits, and on either side of the stool stands a bell-metal lamp (*kuttum boḷicha*). The subject thrice walks round the tripod stool and lamps, and then salutes the lamps and the tripod stool before sitting down on the latter. Circumambulation is clock-wise in auspicious ritual and anti-clockwise in mourning. [346] [778]

In front of the sitting subject is another such stool covered with a red silk cloth. An earthen lamp burns in a metal dining dish (*taḷi*)

<sup>1</sup> The subject sits on the floor fully clothed while the women relatives pour vesselsful of hot water on him.

## THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

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periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' 796  
 is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as in- 777  
 clusive of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspicious-  
 ness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are  
 auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds  
 in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which  
 mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important  
 work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adult Coorgs are usually able to read the *panchāṅga* which may 796  
 be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Panchāṅgas* are 777  
 nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a 805  
 Coorg house to have a *panchāṅga*. It is frequently referred to as it  
 gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days  
 on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one  
 may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur,  
 and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu 787  
 theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to [815]  
 Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events  
 like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes 805  
 from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes,  
 and they are all mentioned in the *panchāṅga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the [77]  
 more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more  
 does its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is [79]  
 Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to  
 the whole of India.

## IV

*Mangala* has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but 796  
 also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in 778  
 his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he 783  
 has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins,  
 Okkaligas, and Gaudas may enter all parts of the ancestral house.  
 Mēdas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved  
 yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washer-  
 men (Maḍivāḷa), and Baṇṇas may come to all parts of the house  
 except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, how-  
 ever, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain

796 occasions like a marriage or an ancestor-propitiation, then the house  
 • 778 is purified after their departure.

783 The sacredness or ritual purity of the ancestral house was better  
 [841] preserved by the fact that a woman was not allowed to stay within  
 it during her periods. Such a woman is in a defiled condition and  
 defilement is contagious. It also cuts off the person affected by it  
 from normal participation in social life.

841 Every ancestral house has an outhouse called *ālē porē* in which  
 a woman stayed for three days during her periods. She attained  
 normal ritual status only on the fourth day after taking a bath.  
 During her periods she had to avoid going near people and objects  
 in a condition of normal ritual status.

761 The death of even an unrelated adult in the house defiles it and  
 783 the members of the particular household. After the corpse is  
 removed, both the house and the members of the household have  
 to be purified.

778 Certain parts of the ancestral house are more sacred than the  
 788 others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the  
 central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp.  
 The container is filled with oil, and there is a cotton wick, one end  
 of which comes through the lamp's lip while the rest trails in the  
 oil held by the container. The wick is lit just beyond the lip, and  
 [823] the lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This  
 lamp is called *nellakki boḷuk* (central-hall lamp). It is lit every  
 morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after  
 lighting it. It will be referred to as wall-lamp throughout this book.

[354] A bell-metal lamp, hung from the ceiling of the central hall, is a  
 common sight in Coorg houses. It is called *tūg boḷuk* or hanging  
 lamp, and it is saluted on all ritual occasions. Shri K. J. Chengappa  
 considers the wall-lamp to be the more ancient and more sacred  
 of the two lamps.

The south-western room (*kanni kōmbarē kōṇē*) and the kitchen  
 (*umbāḷa manē*) are very sacred parts of the ancestral house. The  
 south-western direction is a sacred direction, and the south-  
 western pillar (*kanni kamba*) in the central court of a quadrangular  
 778 house receives ritual respect. On certain occasions like an ancestor-  
 769 propitiation, a lamp is lit in the south-western room. The kitchen  
 is sacred as food is cooked there: food ought to be cooked in a pure  
 place and care is taken to see that impure persons and objects do  
 not get into the kitchen. Sometimes the periodical offerings of food

## THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

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to dead ancestors, which are made in every Coorg house, are made 778  
in the kitchen alone instead of in the ancestor-shrine or anywhere 769  
else.

There are two types of houses in Coorg, one which has an open 342  
quadrangle in the middle and the other in which there is no such 778  
open quadrangle. In the former type, the four corners of the open  
quadrangle are supported by four pillars, and four planks (*aimaras*)  
connect the four pillars at a height of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet from the  
ground. These planks are regarded as sacred: none may step across  
them, and no woman may sit on one of them.

Planks are affixed to the top of the parapet wall in the veranda. [69]  
One of these planks is called the 'ancestors' plank' (*kāraṇavaṇḍa*  
*aimara*), and it is regarded as sacred. None may sleep on it. I have  
heard that anyone sleeping on the 'ancestors' plank' in the house  
of the *Karavaṇḍa okka* is thrown down to the floor by the spirits of  
the ancestors.

Women very rarely visit the veranda (*kaiyālē*), and when they [562]  
visit it they may not sit on one of the planks there. Nor are they [888]  
allowed to sit on the planks in the central hall, though very old  
women occasionally take the liberty of doing so when the senior  
males are away. On the second day of marriage the bride sits on a [585]  
plank in the veranda of the groom's house, and this is part of the  
ritual of admitting her into her husband's house.

At some distance from the main building is a shrine (*kaimaḍa*) 778  
devoted to the worship of the ancestors. During the periodical 769  
ancestor-propitiations (*kāraṇava tēṛē*), small figurines representing  
the ancestors are kept in the shrine and worshipped. During  
festivals, a lamp is lit in the shrine, and cooked food is placed  
before the lamp.

*Kaimaḍas* or ancestor-shrines seem to be a recent phenomenon,  
and before they became popular the dead ancestors were repre-  
sented by unhewn stones fixed in earthen platforms which were  
built round the trunks of milk-exuding trees. These platforms were  
called '*kāraṇava tarē*' or 'ancestors' platform'. Even today in Kig-  
gaṭṇāḍ there are only ancestor-platforms and no ancestor-shrines.

Like the ancestors, cobra-deities are represented by unhewn 776  
stones<sup>1</sup> and fixed in platforms built round the trunks of milk- 778  
exuding trees. The vegetation growing near a cobra-platform is

<sup>1</sup> Minor deities like *Pōḍa* and *Gulika* are also represented by similar stones,  
and occasionally found alongside stones representing cobra-deities.

776 considered sacred, and it is not permitted to cut it down. A woman  
 778 in her periods is not allowed to go near the platform as cobra-  
 deities are considered to be specially sensitive to defilement. If this  
 rule is not respected, she, and probably the *okka* of which she is a  
 member, will suffer misfortune. The cobra is a sacred creature and  
 he who kills it will suffer from a skin disease like leucoderma.

243 There is an attitude of ritual respect towards the ancestral rice-  
 778 field. This is specially noticeable when the crop is standing: a man  
 may not wear sandals while walking through it, or hold an umbrella  
 over his head, or whistle.

The rice-field is divided into a number of ridged-up plots and  
 the central plot of the rice-field is regarded as particularly sacred.  
 [846] Formerly it was the custom to bury the umbilical cord of the eldest  
 son in the central plot. A man is supposed to have a special affinity  
 to the place where his umbilical cord is buried. If a Coorg boy is  
 found going to a particular place frequently, his elders twit him,  
 [871] 'Is your umbilical cord buried there?' Nowadays the umbilical  
 cord is buried in the yard of the palace of Mercara, or in a school-  
 compound, because Coorgs want their sons to do well in examina-  
 tions and become high government officials.

764 A part of the ancestral estate is used for burying or cremating the  
 778 dead members of the *okka*. The part where corpses are buried is  
 called *kēkala* while the adjoining part used for cremation is called  
*tūṅgala*.<sup>1</sup> It is sacred, but in an undesirable way: the term  
 'bad-sacred' has been used to denote such a ritual condition. (Bad-  
 sacredness includes within itself both 'defilement' and 'inauspi-  
 ciousness'.) A visit to the burial-ground defiles a person and a bath  
 [783] is necessary to restore him to normal ritual status.

764 The burial-ground for children may be near the house, whereas  
 775 that for adults must be as far away as possible. The ghosts of adults  
 [858] are harmful, while children's ghosts are comparatively harmless.  
 An adult has a social personality, whereas a child does not have one.  
 An adult occupies a social role or several social roles. The ghost of  
 a headman or hero or a particularly evil man is more powerful than  
 [765] that of an ordinary man. The mourning-period also varies accord-  
 ing to age and social importance of the deceased.

[514] <sup>1</sup> Amongst Coorgs, the corpses of elders and important people are cremated,  
 while the corpses of children and unimportant people are buried. The Brahmins,  
 however, cremate all dead persons except infants, and in many parts of south  
 India castes which want to rise in status give up burial for cremation.

765 mourners are required to perform certain rites while their clothes  
783 are wet and dripping.

On the twelfth or sixteenth day of the death of a person the ceremony of *māda* is performed and this puts an end to ritual mourning for all except the first-grade mourners. Until the performance of *māda*, the mourners offer food every day to the spirit of the dead person. When making these offerings they are required frequently to take a plunge in a well or pond with their clothes on. But this is not a pleasant thing to do, and especially so in the wet and cold seasons, and consequently, after the first plunge for the day, the mourners content themselves by washing their hands and feet, and wetting a corner of their waist-cloths. This is regarded as sufficient to meet the ends of ritual purity. Such a traditionally sanctioned mechanism makes ritual simpler and less inconvenient to the persons concerned.

The widower (or widow) and eldest son go, after the mourning period is over, to Bhāgamandla where the rivers Kāvēri and Kanaké meet. After a shave, they bathe in the confluence of the two rivers, and then offer balls of rice-flour to the dead person's spirit. This is followed by a visit to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara  
[778] where the mourners offer worship. Subsequently they go to the source of the River Kāvēri, bathe in the larger spring, worship the smaller spring, and then return home.

783 Two ideas can be distinguished in the above ritual acts: (1) a ritual bath alters the ritual status of the subject; and (2) bathing in a sacred river is not only purifying in a ritual sense, but also  
184 removes the sins of the bather. This latter idea is shared by Hindus all over India, and when a Coorg bathes in the Kāvēri he participates in a ritual idiom that spreads all over India. The Kāvēri is a sacred river for Hindus in every part of south India, and it is even called the '*dakṣiṇa gāṅga*' or the Southern Ganges. Bathing in the Ganges, or in any other sacred river, rids a person of the sins he  
[782] has committed both in this and in a previous existence. It confers on him spiritual merit (*punya*).

[779] Sanskrit Hinduism has incorporated into itself the idea that bathing changes the ritual status of the bather, and has elaborated it in such a manner that pious Hindus believe in the sin-cleansing and merit-conferring powers of sacred rivers.

846 On the seventh or twelfth day after the birth of a child in a Coorg house, the washerman comes with a vessel full of water in which

## THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

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Red colour seems to have greater ritual value than white, and 822  
silk greater ritual value than cotton. For instance, at a wedding, 585  
the ceiling of the sacred central hall is covered with white cloths, 778  
except for the part just above the bridal seat which is covered with  
red cloths. All the bride's clothes are of red silk, and according to  
the ancient marriage song the groom wore a red silk gown and red  
silk turban.

When a man (or woman) dies his relatives have to carry gifts 764  
of white cotton cloths to him. But the dead man's sisters' children, 822  
or dead woman's brothers' children, have to carry gifts of red silk 778  
cloths. Those who bring gifts of red silk cloths are considered to be  
closer relatives than those who bring white cotton cloths. It is  
those who bring red silk cloths who take part, along with the dead  
man's eldest son and widow, in the important pot-breaking rite  
(*koda kukkuvu*) which ritually severs the dead man's connexion  
with his living relatives.

The ritual preference of silk to cotton is widespread all over 778  
peninsular India among Brahmins, and it is very likely that Coorgs 771  
borrowed the use of red silk from the Brahmins of the west coast.  
The use of red silk in ritual is not very clearly defined—at least it  
is not as clearly defined as the use of the white gown.

The turban is worn on very important auspicious occasions like 291  
a wedding. On less formal occasions a Coorg ties a scarf round his 576  
head. Both men and women tie a scarf round their heads out of  
doors. But no form of head-dress, turban, scarf, or cap, is worn 764  
inside the house. When a kinswoman comes into the house the  
hostess removes her scarf. Failure to do so would be an insult, as it  
would amount to treating the kinswoman as a stranger. Absence  
of head-dress indicates the intimacy that prevails among the mem-  
bers of a household. It is presumably for this reason that everyone,  
including the senior mourners, has to remove his scarf and  
sandals before the corpse. Such removal shows that the dead man, [602]  
and mourners are members of one household. They are kindred,  
and kinship is intimacy. When two people are able to appear before  
each other without scarves they are intimate, they are members of  
the same household. It is an expression of the solidarity prevalent  
between the two.

There is a great social and ritual elaboration of the distinction 589  
between a married woman and a widow. A married woman or  
*garati* is one whose first and only husband is alive. Remarried

# THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGs

589 widows and divorcées have a slightly higher status than widows, but this does not entitle them to be classed as *garatis*.

589 The Coorg widow's dress consists of a white cotton *sari*, a white  
292 cotton blouse, and a white cotton scarf. None of these clothes may  
[24] have a coloured border. The corpse of a widow, too, is dressed in clothes without a coloured border. The corpse of a married woman, on the other hand, is dressed in a coloured *sari* with a coloured, or silver, or gold, border.

[17] The distinction between a widow and married woman is absolutely fundamental in every part of south India. Married women have a great number of privileges, whereas widows have a great number of ritual disabilities. A married woman is auspicious, she is everywhere welcome, whereas a widow is inauspicious, and she is unwelcome everywhere. This deep cleavage expresses itself in the matter of dress also.

## IX

782 After being dressed in ritual robes, the subject of *mangala*  
• 778 salutes the various lamps in the house before sitting down for  
354 *mūrta*. On either side of him is a dish-lamp placed on a tripod stool. The dish-lamp is indispensable on every ritual occasion.

Every day, early in the morning and again just before nightfall, the housewife sweeps the house and sprinkles it with a purifying solution of cow-dung. She then lights the wall-lamp and salutes it. While saluting it she prays to the ancestors of the *okka*, to Mother Kāvēri and Shiva. Every member of the *okka* salutes the wall-lamp after getting up in the morning, and again at night.

[82] The ending of night as well as of day is marked by sweeping and purifying the house, and by lighting and saluting the wall-lamp. The period between the ending of the day and the beginning of night is regarded as a critical time, and children are not given food or allowed to sleep at that time. This is a common south Indian custom.

[78] It is regarded as a bad omen if the lamp goes out while a Coorg is having his dinner. The sudden extinction of the lamp indicates the approach of disaster. The diner gets up from his meal, cleans the dish and washes his hands. He sits down to dinner again a few minutes later. This makes it a different meal altogether and not the one that was interrupted.

372 a ritual attitude towards the kitchen stove. A few embers from the  
 783 kitchen stove and a few grains of cooked rice from a vessel on the  
 stove are put into a dining-dish. Water is poured on the embers and  
 rice, and a thick, ashy liquid is formed in the dining-dish. This  
 liquid is *tefi ntr*, and great protective powers are attributed to it. The  
 mourners returning home on the eleventh day after performing the  
 rites in the burial-ground, a daughter-in-law returning to her  
 conjugal home with her baby born in her natal home, a member of  
 the house returning from a long journey, and a newly bought calf  
 are all sprinkled with it.

783 In the foregoing instances *tefi ntr* removes some inimical or  
 778 dangerous power in the person or object that is coming into the  
 house. People who are 'strangers' to the *okka* have this power in  
 [609] them. A child of a male member of the *okka* born in its mother's  
 372 natal house, a newly bought calf, a member long absent from home,  
 596 and a mourner are all 'strangers' for purposes of *tefi ntr*. Mem-  
 bers of the *okka* enjoy its protection and strength while persons  
 and objects outside it do not do so. Things that stand for the *okka*  
 represent its strength and protective power, and the kitchen stove  
 is an appropriate object to stand for the *okka*. The embers and  
 the cooked rice are both taken from the kitchen stove. The kitchen  
 stove and the dining-dish also stand for commensality which is a  
 basic feature of the *okka* in every part of India. In fact, commens-  
 ality is a legal criterion of 'jointness'. Commensality denotes the  
 unity and strength of the *okka*. Commensality is an act of solidarity.  
 Absence of commensality indicates division. In a country like  
 India where all kinds of ritual rules surround eating, commensality  
 assumes even greater importance than what it would have in  
 another society.

372 The domestic lamp, as long as it is burning, indicates that the  
 776 protective power of the *okka* is active, and its going out indicates  
 171 the withdrawal of such protective power. Such withdrawal spells  
 dangers to the members of the *okka*. The domestic lamp led to a  
 consideration of the significance of the kitchen stove, and this in  
 turn led to a consideration of fire generally and the sun. In  
 Sanskrit or All-India Hinduism, Agni is the god of fire and he  
 is related to Sāvītār or Sūrya, the sun-god. Agni and Sūrya are  
 deities in the Vēdas and they are known and understood all over  
 Hindu India. The local phenomenon of the attribution of sacred-  
 ness to the domestic lamp and kitchen stove is absorbed into the

## THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

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All-India worship of Agni and Sūrya.<sup>1</sup> Coorgs are drawn into an 776  
 All-India ritual idiom which is mainly Sanskritic in character. 372  
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## X

The sprinkling of rice on a person or thing is a common ritual 783  
 act in Coorg, and it is one of the several acts which together form 846  
 the ritual of *mūrta*. An instance of the ritual sprinkling of rice will  
 be considered now with a view to discovering its meaning.

Birth results in pollution for the mother, the new-born infant,  
 and the *okka* of which the mother is a member. While the other  
 members of the polluted *okka* attain normal ritual status on the  
 twelfth day of birth, the mother herself remains polluted till the  
 sixtieth day. On that day, after a bath which ends her long period  
 of pollution, she performs a certain ritual which signifies her  
 resumption of her normal, pre-pollution duties.

One of her normal duties is the bringing of water from the [312]  
 domestic well into the kitchen, and the resumption of this particular  
 duty is dramatized in '*Ganga pūja*' (worship of Ganga or Ganges).  
 The confined woman has a bath, after which she changes into  
 ritually pure garments. She then goes to the domestic well accom-  
 panied by two married women. First of all she salutes the sun by  
 throwing some rice grains into the air, and this is followed by  
 putting small quantities of rice thrice into the well. She then drops  
 a few betel leaves, with the smooth side on top, into the well, and  
 also empties the milk of a slit coconut into it. Finally, the confined  
 woman and, after her, her two companions draw water from the  
 well in vessels and carry the latter into the kitchen.

During the later stages of pregnancy, and for two months after  
 the birth of the child, the confined woman has been freed from all  
 domestic duties. The resumption of her domestic duties on the  
 sixtieth day of the birth of the child is dramatized in the ritual of  
 '*Ganga pūja*'. Her relationship with the domestic well has been  
 broken for some time and the resumption of this relationship is  
 not without a certain amount of 'awkwardness', as in the case of  
 two human beings. The worship of the domestic well, the solidarity [778] ●  
 rites performed towards it, the offering of betel leaves and a  
 coconut all make the process of resumption of contact smoother.

<sup>1</sup> It may be argued, however, that the attribution of sacredness to the domestic  
 lamp and stove is derived from the worship of Agni and Sūrya, and not vice  
 versa.

## THE CULT OF THE OKKA

585 when a girl is married she passes from her mother to her husband.  
 591 Her mother is the person for whom she has the greatest affection, and the replacement of the mother's purse by the groom's purse explains much better what happens than mere words can.

585 After performing *mūrta* to the bride, the groom helps her to get up, and walks with her to the door of the kitchen. He crosses the threshold first, and then, standing on the outer side of the threshold, he offers his right hand to the bride standing in the kitchen. The bride takes his right hand with her right hand and then crosses the threshold. This act symbolizes her exit from her natal home: the kitchen is the normal sphere of activity of a woman, and it stands for and is associated with women in the minds of ordinary people. Thus when the groom helps the bride to cross the threshold of the kitchen of her natal house, the participants are made to realize the loss occasioned to the bride's natal *okka* at marriage.

The bridal pair go in state to the groom's house. The bride salutes the sacred wall-lamp, and then sits on a sacred bench in the central hall, after which she salutes the elders in the groom's house.<sup>1</sup> Normally a woman may not sit on the sacred benches either in the central hall or veranda, and when an exception is made in the case of the bride it is as a recognition of the fact that she has acquired membership in the groom's *okka*.

Later, the bride goes with two married women to the cattle-shed where three new reed-baskets, filled with cow-dung, are kept. Each carries a basket to the groom's rice-fields and empties it in one of the ridged-up plots where rice is grown.

- [278] Accompanied by her two companions the bride then goes to the domestic well. She worships the water in the well, and this is called *ganga pūja* or 'worship of the Ganges'. Each of the three women carries a vessel of water to the kitchen.

[K2] The duties of a woman normally include carrying manure to the fields and fetching water from the domestic well. When the bride carries manure to the groom's fields and carries water into the kitchen of his house she is doing something which she will have to do every day for the rest of her life. She ritually takes up her duties in her husband's house, and frequently on ritual occasions two people accompany the subject in the tasks he or she performs. The reed-baskets are left at the field for Poleya servants of the

<sup>1</sup> In some parts of Coorg she also salutes the south-western pillar and the lamp in the south-western room.

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he wears only the lower part, which covers him below the waist like ~~as~~ a skirt. The Founder is revered more than the other ancestors. <sup>596</sup> But sometimes the Founder<sup>1</sup> is outshone in importance by one of his descendants who was a famous fighter, or a commander of the Rāja's armies, or one of the Rāja's ministers, or a famous magician, or was noted for his piety. The Founder has a start over the other ancestors, but this start does not prevail against a very powerful descendant. Thus a Coorg carries the social importance which he achieves for himself into the world of his ancestors.

People who die on the battlefield, or who die a violent death, become *biras*, and *biras* are regarded as more powerful than other ancestors. The Karavaṇḍa, Biddaṇḍa, and Kaliyāṇḍa *okkas* have <sup>[778]</sup> separate shrines for *biras* called *bira kōṭe*.<sup>2</sup>

A man who is killed by a tiger or panther becomes a 'tiger spirit' (*nari pūda*), and at the ancestor-propitiation the Baṇṇa oracle paints his face yellow and marks it with black stripes or spots just before he is possessed by the 'tiger spirit'.

The wife of an ancestor is called a *kāraṇachchi* or *sōḍalachchi* or *toḍapijji*. It is believed that ancestresses are particularly liable to possess children, another instance of the Coorg belief in the strength of the bond which binds a mother to her children.

Every ancestral house has some place for the worship of the <sup>769</sup> ancestors of the *okka*. This might be a separate shrine called <sup>353</sup> *kaimaḍa*, or a low, earthen platform (*kāraṇava taré*) built round <sup>778</sup> the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. The *kaimaḍa* is a single-room shrine usually facing east, the sacred direction. When an ancestor-propitiation (*kāraṇava téré*) is performed, wooden figurines representing each of the ancestors, or crude figures embossed on sheets of copper or silver, or gold, or even slabs of stone with figures sculptured on it, are kept before a lamp lighted in the ancestor-shrine. The Paṭṭamāḍa *okka* perform an ancestor-propitiation whenever an elder dies, and on this occasion they have wooden

<sup>1</sup> The Founder is usually a man, but in certain exceptional cases the honour may fall on a woman. In a certain *okka* in Nālknāḍ the men were all slaughtered in a fight over 160 years ago, and the only survivor was a pregnant woman who fled to the shrine of Pāyūrappa in Malabar. This lady gave birth to a son and returned later to her conjugal *okka* in Nālknāḍ. She is regarded as the Founder of this *okka*, and is propitiated annually at the end of the harvest festival.

<sup>2</sup> *Bira* is a corruption of the Sanskrit *vīra*, which means a 'hero'. In the Kan-naḍa country memorial stones called *Iragallu* were formerly erected for heroes dying in battle.

769 representations of ancestors made which they deposit in the river  
 353 Kāvēri at the end of the propitiation. Sometimes personal posses-  
 778 sions of the ancestors such as walking-sticks or the small Coorg  
 sword called *piché katti* are kept in the shrine during the ancestor-  
 propitiation.

Ordinarily the ancestor-shrine does not contain sculptured  
 images, or unhewn stones, representing the ancestors of the *okka*.  
 But during an ancestor-propitiation wooden or other figurines  
 representing ancestors might be kept in the ancestor-shrine. In  
 those parts of Coorg where there are no ancestor-shrines, every  
 house has an earthen platform built round the trunk of a milk-  
 exuding tree, and a rough, unhewn stone embedded in the plat-  
 [776] form stands for all the ancestors of the *okka* collectively. An  
 unhewn stone embedded in an earthen platform might also  
 stand for a deity like Pūda, Guḷika, Kētrappa, and Nāta (cobra-  
 deity).<sup>1</sup>

Some Coorgs consider that the ancestor-shrine or platform is  
 built over the grave of the Founder of the *okka*, and that the cobra-  
 platform is built at a spot where a cobra breathed its last. There is  
 no evidence to support either of these views.

769 Ancestor-platforms are the rule in Kiggaṭṇāḍ in south-east  
 353 Coorg. It has been mentioned that Kiggaṭṇāḍ has a great deal in  
 124 common with Kannaḍa culture, and contrasts with Nālknāḍ and  
 Kaḍiyetnāḍ in the south-west which are influenced by Malabar.  
 The Baṇṇas and Paṇikas, masters of the technique of ancestor-  
 propitiation in a Coorg house, are both Malayāḷam-speaking castes  
 and their influence normally does not penetrate as far east as  
 Kiggaṭṇāḍ. The elaborate propitiation of ancestors, with the  
 Baṇṇas or Paṇikas acting as oracles of the dead ancestors, does not  
 prevail in Kiggaṭṇāḍ: in the latter area propitiation is restricted to  
 the offer of meat and liquor.

Ancestor-shrines or *kaimaḍas* are found in Coorg to the  
 south-west of Mercara, but they are far from universal. Moegling,  
 writing in 1855, tells us that only 'seven of the Armēri [village  
 near Virarājpet] houses have regular little temples where *kōla* or  
*bhārani* is performed'.<sup>2</sup> Even today several prosperous and well-

<sup>1</sup> All over south India village-deities like Māri are frequently represented by  
 rough unhewn stones. The Coorg instance is only a part of a wider phenomenon  
 spreading over south India, but there are other features which link up Coorg  
 especially with Malabar and South Canara.

<sup>2</sup> *Coorg Memoirs*, p. 62.

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known *okkas* such as the Kolandēra, Mandepanda, Maneyapanda, 769  
and Koravanda have no ancestor-shrines. 353

Originally, odd stones embedded in earthen platforms built 184  
round the trunks of trees seem to have represented the ancestors  
everywhere in Coorg Proper, but later the ancestor-shrine seems  
to have replaced the earthen platforms in certain houses. The richer  
Coorgs then seem to have increasingly taken to such shrines:  
Moegling writes, 'those who cannot afford to build a *kaimaḍa* make  
a sort of mud bank for the purpose called *kōṣa* under a tree in the  
fields where the family's first house stood'.<sup>1</sup> It is likely that the [556]  
possession or lack of an ancestor-shrine soon came to indicate, in  
certain areas, the economic and social position of an *okka*.

The next step in the elaboration of the *kaimaḍa*-complex was 769  
the building of special shrines for ancestors who died on the battle- 778  
field. Yet another step was taken when a sculptured image repre-  
senting an ancestor or an ancestor's benefactor was placed in the  
ancestor-shrine. For instance, the chieftain Achchu Nāyaka was  
helped by the Kannaḍa ruler of Piriyaṭṭa, Nanjunḍa Arasu  
(c. 1670), to regain his chieftaincy. The grateful Achchu Nāyaka  
built a shrine in which sculptured images of himself and his bene-  
factor were placed.

In the ancestral house of the Kōḍanda house in Kaḍanga Marūr  
village there are two tombs built over the graves of two ancestors  
who attained to very high positions in the service of the Rājas.  
These tombs have been built just outside the ancestor-shrine, and  
are crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, the 'vehicle' of Shiva.  
Tombs, and especially tombs crowned with figures of the Nandi  
Bull, are very popular among the Lingāyaṭs of south India. Coorgs  
who were in the employment of the Lingāyaṭ Rājas borrowed the  
customs, manners, and ritual of their rulers.

During festivals like harvest festival, and at marriage, a little 769  
meat curry and rice are offered on a plantain leaf to the ancestors. 782  
A leaf-cup of arrack is also kept on the plantain leaf. The ancestors  
consume the essence of the offering and thereby consecrate it. All  
over Hindu India food, or any article which has been offered to  
a deity, is called *prasāda*, and worshippers have to partake of the  
*prasāda*. Food which is offered to a deity is later distributed among  
the worshippers, who eat it. Where flowers which have been placed

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 62-68. By 'family's first house' Moegling obviously means the  
ancestral house.

769 exist cheek by jowl as far as the bulk of Coorgs are concerned.  
 782 The more inquiring of the men see the two modes of propitiation  
 184 as mutually inconsistent, but such an inconsistency does not  
 seriously trouble anyone. All over India Sanskritic and non-  
 Sanskritic customs, often involving beliefs regarded as mutually  
 inconsistent, are found existing together. Usually, the non-San-  
 skritic custom either drops out or is transformed to suit the  
 Sanskritic custom, but this process takes a very long time. There  
 is also no doubt, however, that the non-Sanskritic customs of every  
 caste as well as those of sects and peripheral groups are con-  
 tinually being Sanskritized. This has been happening for over 2,000  
 years all over India.

Splinter groups like Amma Coorgs are decades, if not centuries,  
 in advance of their parent-groups: the former have solved their  
 problem by Sanskritizing their customs entirely while the latter  
 are more conservative. Sometimes the splinter groups are so far in  
 advance of their neighbours that they incur the wrath of everyone.  
 They might even be ostracized by the other castes.

## XV

776 It has already been mentioned that every *okka* has a *nāta*, which  
 • 778 is a platform where unhewn stones representing cobra-deities are  
 562 embedded. Vegetation is allowed to grow freely around this plat-  
 form. There is a ban on women approaching the cobra-platform  
 during their periods as the cobra-deities are extremely sensitive to  
 impurity of any sort. Though women no longer observe seclusion  
 during their periods, they are even now afraid of going near the  
 cobra-platform because of the belief that its defilement would  
 result in some misfortune to their *okka*. The angered cobra-deity  
 [539] may be roused to bite a member. This is clearly seen in the ancient  
 saw, 'The deceit of women is very great, O, Snake, please do not bite  
 us' (*pommakkaḍa māya marmāya pāmbē, ariyatē tiriyatē koriyatē*  
*pāmbē*): a member prays to the cobra-deity not to bite even though  
 it has been angered by women going near the cobra-platform  
 during their periods. Women are likely to conceal such violations  
 [783] from others, especially males. If they are frank enough to tell what  
 they have done, purificatory and expiatory rites could be performed  
 776 to appease the cobra-deity.

778 Among Hindus all over India, cobras and the ant-hills in which

they live are worshipped on certain occasions. In south India there 776 is a belief that a cobra lives to a very great age, and that as it gets 778 older its tail becomes shorter. During the last period of its life it is said to develop wings. Coorgs share these beliefs, and some of them assert that a cobra-platform is built above the spot where a cobra ended its earthly existence.

All over India there is a reluctance to kill the cobra even though 776 it is a dangerous creature. Coorgs abstain from killing cobras [784] found in temples and believed to be harmless, whereas they do not hesitate to kill cobras found outside temples.

The following incident is significant: A's brother did not consider it a sin to kill cobras. He one day found two cobras copulating and shot one of them dead. Several years passed without A's brother obtaining a son. Some Brahmins told him that he had committed a great sin in killing a sacred creature like the cobra and that he would not have a son till he had performed the necessary expiatory ritual. They further told him that the sin was so great that even after he had performed the expiatory ritual no more than one son would be born to him. He duly performed the necessary [788] expiatory ritual under the guidance of Brahmin priests, and later he made a pilgrimage to the great cobra-shrine of Subramanya in the Tulu country. Sometime afterwards his wife gave birth to a son, and together with his wife and son he again visited the shrine of Subramanya to express his gratitude to the deity.

Formerly, in the month of Scorpio, lamps were lit before the 776 cobra-platform every evening. In addition, in a few Coorg *okkas*, 782 a Brahmin priest visited the platform and worshipped the cobra-184 deity, using Sanskrit *mantras*.

In the cobra-worship of Coorgs are to be found certain elements which are common to Hindus all over India, others confined to Hindus in Peninsular India, and yet others which are found only in Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg. The worship of cobras takes certain forms in Malabar which are very similar to those in Coorg: in the former area it is common to find in the houses of high-caste Hindus a shrine for cobras in the south-western corner of the large compound round the ancestral house. The cobra-deities in a house are intimately associated with it. The vegetation growing around a cobra-platform may not be cut down, and no one in a condition of ritual impurity may approach the platform.

In the Kannaḍa, Tamil, and Telugu countries, on the other

776 hand, cobra-worship has a different orientation. In each village or  
 782 locality, a platform is built round a peepul-tree (*ficus religiosa*) and  
 184 on this platform are kept sculptured images of single snakes, or of  
 two intertwined snakes. Such a platform is worshipped by all the  
 people in the locality.

Cobra-worship among Coorgs has the same orientation it has in  
 Malabar but for one important difference: in Malabar the deity  
 Subramanya does not seem to be connected with cobras, whereas  
 everywhere else in south India cobras are identified with Subra-  
 • [778] manya, the second son of Shiva. Shrines dedicated to Subramanya,  
 some of them well-known centres of pilgrimage, are commonly  
 found in south India.

776 The identification of cobras with Subramanya demonstrates the  
 779 way in which Sanskritic Hinduism operates. The worship of  
 177 cobras is very popular among all Hindus, and the identification  
 of cobras with Subramanya provides a door for the entry of  
 Sanskritic Hinduism. People who until then had only been wor-  
 shipping cobras came to know about Subramanya, the son of  
 Shiva. They also learn of the story of Subramanya's birth, which  
 is a tiny slice of Hindu mythology; and of Shiva, his relation to  
 other gods like Vishnu and Brahma, and so on. Pilgrimages to  
 shrines dedicated to Subramanya became popular, and these  
 shrines again are a source for the further spread of Sanskritic  
 Hinduism. There are usually myths about these shrines and each  
 such myth tells the pilgrim a little more about Sanskritic Hinduism.

776 Stones representing Pūda and Gulika are frequently found in  
 778 the compound of a Coorg's house. Pūda is the Tamil corruption of  
 the Sanskritic *bhūta*, which means a spirit. Pūda is frequently one  
 of the deities in a village temple.

Gulika in the Tamil country is the name of one of the eight  
 serpents supporting the earth in Hindu mythology. In Malabar  
 and Coorg, however, he is better known as the son of Saturn. He  
 is also referred to as Māndi.

[761] Gulika is associated with death: a man is supposed to see  
 [787] Gulika just before dying. Horoscopes drawn up in Malabar and  
 [789] Coorg show the position of Gulika, and this is said to indicate  
 when the native is going to die. When a number of deaths take  
 place in a Coorg's house it is customary to plant a stone called  
 Mrityu Gulika (death Gulika). This is believed to put an end to  
 the deaths.

Gulika is different from Kūli which merely means a spirit or 776 ghost. Kūlis are troublesome spirits which cause illness, possess people, and have to be propitiated with offerings of food and drink.

## XVI

The ancestral house has a special importance to a Coorg: he 596 regards it as sacred, he is bound by very powerful ties to it, and he 778 considers it the proper place where the marriage of a member 796 should be celebrated and where his funeral should be performed. Even today the various branches of an *okka* gather together at the ancestral house during the harvest festival and during the Kāvēri festival. They also gather together for the festival of the local village-deity which may be held annually or biennially, and for the performance of ancestor-propitiation.

The house is swept and cleaned every day, and on special ritual [356] occasions such as a festival or ancestor-propitiation, its walls are colour-washed, and the floor washed with a solution of cow-dung, a common purifying agent all over India. A festival is also a holiday, and the men abstain from agricultural work and perform festival tasks such as hanging up festoons of mango leaves on the *lir'el* above the main door. Everyone has a bath and changes into clean clothes brought by the washerman. A festival also means a feast and the 627 feast may be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian. All over south India the feasts which are a part of calendar festivals may not include non-vegetarian dishes—this is an idea implicit in Sanskrit Hinduism. Non-Brahmins usually prepare non-vegetarian dishes on the day following the feast.

Coorgs follow other Hindus in preparing purely vegetarian 796 dishes on festival days. Even the ancestors are offered vegetarian dishes at these calendar festivals. But on those occasions which are exclusively devoted to the worship of ancestors meat and pork dishes and *arrack* are the preferred offerings to them. Some village-deities again require offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor at festivals in their honour.

Another aspect of calendar festivals needs to be referred to here: 796 festivals such as the festival of arms and the harvest festival include 526 games like shooting at a target, running a race, throwing a 578 stone, &c. These games prove an occasion for the expression of the rivalry that exists between the *okkas* in a village or *nād*. Such an

## THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS 179

heavy jungle. A festival of a village-deity usually implies co-796 operation with the people of another village or *nāḍ*, or with certain castes or tribes living in different villages or *nāḍs*.

## II

Village-deities are an All-India phenomenon. By this it is 10/ meant that the deities who are worshipped in villages in various 776 parts of India have more or less the same character and attributes, and that the technique of propitiating them is broadly similar. These statements no doubt sound vague and general, but any attempt to make them more precise will have to take account of exceptions at every point.

While the phenomenon is broadly similar all over India, there are important regional variations. Generally speaking, within India, each region or district has a greater unity than the larger area of which it is a part. Inside peninsular India, for instance, each linguistic area represents an area of greater cultural homogeneity and social solidarity. But there are also cultural forms which are common to two or more linguistic areas. Malayāḷam and Tamil areas have certain cultural forms in common; and similarly Kannaḍa, Telugu, and Marāṭhi areas have some cultural forms in common. Within each linguistic area too there are differences: cultural forms present in the centre of a linguistic area might not be present in the peripheral regions or present only in an altered form. Geographical barriers also usually represent cultural barriers. For instance, cultural forms found in the Malabar littoral strip have great difficulty in spreading into the mainland of peninsular India. A country like Coorg, which lies at the periphery of three linguistic areas, Kannaḍa, Malayāḷam, and Tuḷu, has certain cultural forms in common with each of them.

Throughout peninsular India village-deities are represented by 17/ unhewn stones or by crude images of stone or wood. They are 778 either housed in shrines which are usually not very elaborate, or 782 simply embedded in the earth without any roof above them. A shrine dedicated to a village-deity is frequently found either at the foot of a tree or in the shade of a grove. Worship may or may not be offered daily at these shrines. There is no uniform rule applicable in this matter. Practice varies from village to village, and even from temple to temple: in some temples worship (*pūja*) is

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- 171 offered every day, in others once a week, while still others come to  
 778 life only annually or once every few years, when the festival of the  
 782 deity is being celebrated. Such a festival usually lasts several days and culminates in the sacrifice of fowl, sheep, goats, and buffaloes. Devotees walk barefoot across fire, gash themselves with swords, and so on, on the last day of the festival.

[785]  
 [789] While the priests at the Sanskrit temples are usually<sup>1</sup> Brahmins, 171  
 793 men belonging to one of the non-Brahmin castes are frequently priests at the temples dedicated to village-deities. Here again practice varies from region to region, village to village, and temple to temple. For instance, in Coorg, Brahmins from South Canara are commonly priests at temples dedicated to village-deities. In Mysore and the Tamil country, on the other hand, a member of a non-Brahmin caste is normally priest at the temple of a village-deity.

171 Throughout peninsular India, excluding Kēraḷa, Māri is a  
 776 common village-deity. She presides over epidemic diseases such as  
 [164] plague, smallpox, and cholera, which usually occur in summer. The propitiation of Māri with offerings and festival takes place in summer, and also whenever plague or cholera or smallpox breaks out.

Village-deities in peninsular India are frequently females. This is specially true of the area east of the Western Ghats. Ellamma (literally 'boundary-mother') is a familiar deity in Telugu and Tamil villages. Kālī is another familiar goddess.

All village-deities are not, however, goddesses: there are also gods. Ayyanār, for instance, is a very popular god in Tamil villages and he keeps watch on the village when the villagers are asleep. Bīrēdēvaru is a popular god in Kannaḍa villages.

- 171 All over peninsular India, with the exception of the Malayālam-  
 782 speaking areas, bull buffaloes are favourite animals for sacrifice to village-deities. In the Malayālam-speaking areas, however, the favourite animals for sacrifice are the pig, goat, sheep, and fowl. The south-western part of Coorg shares numerous cultural forms with Malabar, and there the bull buffalo is not sacrificed to village-deities. In the eastern and northern parts, however, buffaloes are sacrificed to village-deities, especially Māri. But

<sup>1</sup> I say 'usually' and not 'invariably' because sometimes there are non-Brahmin priests at the shrines of Sanskrit deities. For instance, in many temples dedicated to Shiva in one or other of his numerous forms there are Lingayat priests.

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796 few years, a third man whether he should go ahead with a business  
787 or other venture he has been contemplating for some time, and so on. (He answers questions again that night.)

Outside the temple compound Poleyas oracles are possessed by their deities. They run about possessed, and their possession comes to an end when the possession of the Bhadrakālī oracle comes to an end. While possessed, the Poleyas oracles may be called upon to exorcise evil spirits from people.

796 After the possession stops, devotees make offerings of money  
[782] (*kāṇikē*) to the deity.<sup>1</sup> Miniature silver representations of a human being, of any part of the body; and of a cradle are made by those who had vowed to make such offerings on recovery from an illness, or recovery of the normal use of an organ, or the birth of a child, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The afternoon concludes with the Brahmin priests' offering to the devotees parched rice sweetened with jaggery and coffee. The villagers then disperse.

## V

At about 9 p.m. the people of Kuklūr and sightseers from other villages gather together at the threshing-yard of the Nandiyanda *okka*. Mēdas and Poleyas play on their drums and pipes, and Coorg men and boys dance to their music. Four villagers beat the big drum (*dōlu*), singing the drum song which is about Bhadrakālī. Votive animals, to be offered to Bhadrakālī, are all assembled here before being driven to the temple. In 1941 there were twenty-three sheep; three goats, and fifty fowls. This was exclusive of one 'village goat' (*ūrāḍu*) and two 'village fowls' (*ūru kōḷi*) which are subscribed for by the entire village.<sup>3</sup>

● [778] With a brass mask of Bhadrakālī as nucleus, a Paṇika builds a circular *téré*—a framework of bamboo covered with thin sheets of the pith of the *pāmbalē* plant. This *téré* is leaned against two pegs and then the Paṇika worships it. He kills a chicken and cooks it in

<sup>1</sup> Collections are also made on the ninth and eleventh days. The expenses of the festival are met out of the money raised at the collections. Rs110 was collected on the tenth day.

[778] <sup>2</sup> This custom prevails all over south India.

<sup>3</sup> It is known that formerly between 300-400 animals were annually sacrificed to Bhadrakālī. The number has fallen off very greatly now. A very small section of Coorg opinion would like to do away with animal sacrifice altogether.

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796 During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to  
533 house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',  
622 which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the  
[574] song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given  
gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house  
first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the  
harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the  
adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's  
house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the  
dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light  
[574] repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a *dudi*  
(small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not  
[681] refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman  
is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakālī festival, the villagers frequently move  
about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the  
head of these processions walks the *nād*-headman's wife carrying  
• [778] a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on  
every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the *nād*-headman's  
wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakālī.

178 The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120  
622 years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies  
596 coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the  
headman's *okka* which benefited from the new economic and  
educational opportunities. The *okkas* which benefited from the  
latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and  
authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation,  
and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between  
him and the newly rich *okkas* but instead accentuated it. The  
latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure  
headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

[556] The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that fre-  
quently the headman could not fulfil the duties of hospitality  
periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable  
to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others  
178 performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to  
622 the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.

627 Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman

destructive of sin (*pāpa*). Bathing in the Kāvēri on certain days 779 such as the first of Libra and Shivarātri is specially productive of 777 *puṇya*.

The Kāvēri is called '*dakṣiṇa ganga*' or 'southern Ganges', and 778 ● the Kāvēri myth (see Appendix) tells us that waters of the Ganges 788 and other sacred rivers and seas are present in the source of the 171 river on the first of Libra at the moment of the river's birth. The faithful believe that there is an underground passage connecting the source of the river with the Ganges at Benares. Pilgrims to the Tala Kāvēri, like pilgrims to Benares, return with the water of the sacred river in sealed copper pots. This water is used for ritual [783] purification and drinking on certain days. Coorg pilgrims sprinkle the holy water on members of their *okka*, and on the house, granary, and cattle.

Offerings of balls of rice-flour are made to dead relatives on the 171 banks of the Kāvēri; and the ends of the garments of the husband 769 and wife are tied together while bathing in the river and in the 783 larger of the two springs of Tala Kāvēri. Both these concepts are common to Hindus all over India.

The Kāvēri Myth, whose authorship appears to be Brahminical, 773 has the Ganges Myth for its model. As is well known, the Ganges 778 meets the Jumna at Allahabād, and to this, Hindu mythology adds 171 a third river, the Saraswati, which is said to flow underground and join unseen the first two rivers. The confluence of the Ganges, Jumna, and the mythical Saraswati is called '*trivēṇi sangama*' or 'union of three rivers'.

At Bhāgamandla, about three miles from the source of the Kāvēri, it meets the Kanaké. But to this the Kāvēri Myth adds a third river, the Sujyoti, which is said to flow underground and join the first two.

There is a myth about practically every river in India, and in every one of these myths some Sanskritic deities, and sages and characters from the epics and the *purāṇas*, take part. Each myth in time becomes a part of the vast corpus of Hindu mythology. Each myth makes sacred certain features of local geography by associating deities, and characters from the epics and *purāṇas*, with them. The myths abound in inconsistencies which, however, do not bother the bulk of the Hindus.

On certain occasions Coorg women are required to worship the 778 domestic well, and this is referred to as '*ganga pūja*'. A similar 171

778 custom exists everywhere in south India among Hindus. Water  
171 is identified with the holy Ganges, and such an identification teaches a Hindu to regard the Ganges as a deity. It opens a window on Sanskrit Hinduism.

773 On the way to Tala Kāvēri from Bhāgamaṇḍla there is an  
778 immense boulder called 'Bhīma's pebble'. It is said that Bhīma, one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, found a tiny 'pebble' in his dinner which he picked up and threw away. What was a tiny pebble to Bhīma is an immense boulder to ordinary human beings. Bhīma's strength was prodigious, and his strength, enormous appetite, and chivalry have made him the most lovable of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, the heroes of the epic, Mahābhārata. 'Bhīma's pebble' makes the epic more immediate to Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg.

The mountain in which the Kāvēri rises is called Brahmagiri, and it is said that the god Brahma has settled down on top of the mountain. Brahma was in two minds as to whether he should settle down on top of the Brahmagiri mountain or a neighbouring one, and he finally decided on the former as it was higher than the latter by a rice grain.

778 While ideally the Kāvēri is sacred to every Hindu, actually it is  
788 mostly Hindus from various parts of south India, especially  
171 Mysore, Malabar, and the Tamil country who go on pilgrimage to the river-source on the first of Libra. Similarly the shrine of Subramanya is sacred to every Hindu, though actually only Hindus from the Kannaḍa- and Tulu-speaking areas visit it. But there are centres of pilgrimage such as the Temple of Venkātāchala at Tirupati in the Telugu country visited by Hindus from practically every part of south India. The temples of Mīnākshi at Madura and Rāmēshwara at Rāmēshwaram in south-east India are visited by Hindu pilgrims from every part of India. In continental India, too, there are several places of pilgrimage for Hindus from every part of India.

778 Deities too have varying 'spreads' even though ideally they are  
171 sacred to all Hindus. In fact, over a period of time 'spread' shows a dynamic quality: a deity who commanded the devotion of a king enlarged his 'spread' to include the territory ruled by the king.

171 Peninsular India is an area of enormous cultural diversity, but it forms a loose unity viewed in relation to continental India, just as India itself exhibits some unity when viewed in relation to the rest

## HINDUISM

221

the mythology of All-India Hinduism, and also its myths and legends are Sanskritized and made the property of Hindus all over India. Thus the Kāvēri Purāṇa becomes a part of the mythology of All-India Hinduism.

The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, too, play an important part in the spread of Hinduism. The existence of 'Bhīma's pebble' near the source of Kāvēri has been mentioned earlier. The Lakshmanatirtha river which rises in the plateau of Brahmagiri in the extreme south of the province is named after Lakshmana, brother of the hero of the older epic, Rāmāyaṇa. It is said that Rāma and Lakshmana passed through Coorg in the course of their wanderings. Lakshmana, the younger brother, whose obedience to Rāma is proverbial, and who is held up as a model for all younger brothers, disobeyed Rāma as soon as he (Lakshmana) left Coorg and entered Malabar. He realized the enormity of his sin when he returned to Coorg and tried to atone for it by jumping into a fire which he made by shooting an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks. Rāma at once created a river to save his brother. This river he called Lakshmanatirtha and it joins the Kāvēri in Mysore State. Rāma established a *linga* (symbol of Shiva or Ishwara) at the spot where Lakshmana tried to commit suicide. The temple built there is called the Rāmēshwara temple (Ishwara established by Rāma), and it is probable that this temple is an imitation of the famous temple of Rāmēshwara, in the extreme south-eastern corner of India. Coorgs and others go on pilgrimage to the temple at Irpu during Shivārātri, an All-India festival in honour of Shiva.

Mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees become associated with characters and incidents in the epics and *purāṇas*. Such local myths are found in every part of India: Rāma built a temple here, Sita bathed in this river near that rock, Shiva and Pārvati live in Kailāsa in the Himālayas, Agastya the sage meditated on top of that mountain, and so on. One's country becomes the home of one's gods. Patriotism acquires a religious quality.

Certain restrictions observed by Coorgs in common with other Hindus serve to mark them off from members of other religions. Occasionally these restrictions refer to certain incidents and characters in popular Hindu mythology. For instance, Coorg children are told to wash their feet and hands thoroughly before coming into the house from the street. The story of King Nala is told them as a warning: Nala one day left an unwashed spot on his

778 ankle and this enabled Saturn to possess him. Subsequently Naja  
774 lost his throne, was separated from his beloved wife, became  
177 deformed owing to serpent-bite, and finally ended up as cook to a  
king.

It is said in Coorg that Saturn jumped on Naja while the latter was standing under a *tāṇḍi* tree. Coorgs usually utter Naja's name when they have to pass under a *tāṇḍi* tree, and this is said to have the effect of warding off Saturn.

The above restrictions make the story of Naja, which is known to all Hindus, more immediate to Coorgs. The observance of common restrictions frequently marks off one community from another. Such observance can become a symbol of the community's solidarity and identity.

778 Coorgs, like other Hindus, regard the cow as sacred, and are  
171 opposed to killing it. They also abstain from eating beef. The cow  
[262] has recently figured prominently in Hindu-Muslim relations and has come to be a symbol for Hindu solidarity and identity. Orthodox Hindu opinion regards the killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle which exist in India today is detrimental to the economy of the nation.

Reverence for the cow unites Coorgs with other Hindus. It marks both off from other communities living in India.

779 Certain Sanskritic theological ideas have profoundly affected  
775 the lives of Coorgs. Ideas about *karma* and *dharma* are widespread  
177 among Coorgs, not only amongst the educated but also amongst the uneducated peasantry. The Coorg funeral song abounds in Sanskritic theological ideas: a man dies 'when the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa is finished'. After death, a bad man goes to hell (*naraka*) and a good man to heaven (*swarga*). A man is continually reborn till he attains salvation (*mōksha*). The surviving relatives pray that the dead man may not be reborn either as man or beast, because being implies suffering. They pray that he may go to heaven and not return to earth any more.

## V

776 Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb  
177 local religious phenomena. Sanskritic deities frequently undergo changes in the process of being localized. An example will make

[A 228]

## VIII RELIGION AND SOCIETY

### I

243 COORG is primarily an agricultural country, and the bulk  
788 of the Coorg community is directly dependent on the land. Even those who are employed in the government have one or more branches of their *okkas* living in the ancestral house and attending to the cultivation of their ancestral lands.

There was no coffee in Coorg over a hundred years ago, and rice was then the most important crop in every way. A Coorg *okka*, and the family (or families) of Poleyas who were its slaves, cultivated the ancestral rice-fields. The Poleyas did much of the actual manual work on the estate under the close supervision of their Coorg masters; and every member of the Coorg *okka* directly or indirectly contributed to the work on the estate.

243 A Coorg was completely preoccupied with the cultivation of  
rice from May to January, beginning with the first ploughing of  
[438] the fields in May and ending with the harvesting of the crop in  
January. The surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer, and  
[796] this necessitated the organization of an annual caravan in which  
every *okka* in the village (or *nād*) participated. The festivals of the  
village-deities and weddings were performed in the summer  
months, after the men had returned from Malabar. Thus the  
social activities of a Coorg revolved round and adjusted themselves  
to the cultivation of rice and the sale of the surplus in Malabar.

The ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting of the crop, the granary in which paddy is stored, and the measures used for measuring paddy and rice all receive ritual attention.

423 The ancestral estate, the most valuable part of which is the rice-  
778 field, is regarded as sacred. A Coorg is not allowed to walk in it  
784 wearing his sandals, just as he is not allowed to enter the inner  
parts of the ancestral house, or a temple, with his sandals on. He  
is also not allowed to whistle, or hold an umbrella over his head,  
while walking in the ancestral estate: both these acts are not con-  
sistent with the ritual respect which the estate has to be accorded.

to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her, like flowers, vermilion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the marriage badge (*tāhī*), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from ritual. [778]

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is similar to the Brahmin's, though the differentiation between married woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin. But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently. 589 77

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of ten children was entitled to have *mangala* performed in her honour. 581 842 554

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual. 554

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg. Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into every festival. 81 177 [736]

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main elements do not take up more than a day. 181 726

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which 411

101 he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break  
 796 in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his  
 411 gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are wor-  
 shipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

224 The Kaniya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspi-  
 • 778 cious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the  
 [78] *poyyakané* tree. He also decides when the village or *nād* should  
 have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party  
 should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the  
 man who should lead the hunt.

226 The branches of the *poyyakané* tree are used for making barriers  
 which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of  
 transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in  
 the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are  
 regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport.

[538] An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on  
 fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at  
 a ruinous rate of interest.

411 The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central  
 782 hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandal-  
 wood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast,  
 mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a  
 deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite  
 flower used for worship on this occasion is the *tōku* which derives  
 its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and  
 cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

224 After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the  
 south-western room, or central hall. The head of the *okka* hands  
 over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after  
 receiving his weapons.<sup>1</sup> The headman says, as he stands over the  
 weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging  
 beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not  
 underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend,  
 be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the *okka* feeds the domestic dogs with cooked  
 rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the *okka* leave the house  
 for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar  
 cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the  
 jungle.

[857] <sup>1</sup> A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.

538 Richter's understandable irritations and prejudices prevented him from  
 177 comprehending the true function of the *purāṇa*, which is to account for certain inconsistencies in the culture of Coorgs, and to 'place' them in the caste system. Also the weaving of a *purāṇa* round a local river or mountain represents only an initial step in the Sanskritization of the beliefs, customs, and rites of a people. It prepares the way for subsequent complete Sanskritization. Certain theological and moral ideas come initially with the *purāṇas*.

Richter is right in saying that few Coorgs could have understood a *purāṇa* written in a mixture of Sanskrit and literary Kannaḍa. He could not have foreseen that it would become a folksong several decades later.

538 The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* describes the story of the divine origin of the  
 778 river, enumerates the sacred bathing places along its course from source to estuary, and some of the temples on its banks. It deals with Coorg, the country in which the river has its origin, and Coorgs, who are its most distinctive, numerous, and important inhabitants. It gives the story of the origin of Coorgs.

539 Long ago, Kavēra Muni, a sage, retired to Brahmagiri (the present source of the River Kāvēri) mountain in order to meditate on Brahma, the Creator. Kavēra's devotion was so great that in the end four-headed Brahma appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. Kavēra told Brahma that he wanted children. Brahma replied that Kavēra could not have any children of his own because of sins committed in a previous life, but as Kavēra had shown exceptional devotion, Brahma presented him with Lopāmudré, Brahma's adopted daughter, and a manifestation of Pārvati. The sage was pleased with the boon. Lopāmudré informed Kavēra that she regarded herself as his daughter, and that she wanted to become a holy river, a bath in which would rid people of their sins.

The girl lived with her foster-parents, Kavēra and his wife, till they both died. Some time after their death she met a great sage Agastya,<sup>1</sup> who had gone to the Brahmagiri mountain in order to meditate on Shiva. Agastya fell in love with Kāvēri, as the foster-daughter of Kavēra was called, and asked her to marry him. She agreed on condition that she would leave him for good if she was ever left alone even for a little while.

One morning Agastya wanted to bathe in Kanaké, a river which rises in the Brahmagiri mountain, a mile from the source of the Kāvēri. He put his wife into a vessel and handed the vessel to his young Brahmin disciples for safe keeping during his absence. Kāvēri, annoyed at being

<sup>1</sup> Agastya is a famous rishi, the son of the Vedic gods Mitra and Varuṇa by Ūrvaśi. He is said to have been born in a water-jar, and was very short of stature. He once drank up the oceans, and compelled the Vindhya mountains to prostrate themselves before him. Tradition accords him a great place in Tamil literature, and also credits him with the introduction of Sanskrit Hinduism and Sanskrit literature into the South. He is also associated with mountains.

538 The *Kāvēri Māhātmya* brings the River Kāvēri and its worship into  
 778 the main stream of the *purāṇas* which have an All-India spread. It also  
 makes Sanskritic deities and ideas familiar to the inhabitants of Coorg. A  
 special and intimate relation is established between Coorg, Coorgs, and  
 the river as a result of it. A distinctive feature of the dress of Coorg  
 women is associated with the Kāvēri. Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their  
 [551] patron goddess. At least one in ten girls is named Kāvēri.

773 The account of the origin of Coorgs in the *Kāvēri Māhātmya* is an  
 attempt to reconcile certain facts which are not easy to reconcile. While  
 it is true that Coorgs are a wealthy and powerful group with a martial  
 outlook, they do not perform certain Vedic rituals which are performed  
 by Kshatriyas elsewhere in India, and their dietary includes domestic  
 pork and liquor. The myth finds a way out of the difficulties by suggest-  
 ing that they are Ugras, the descendants of a Kshatriya father and  
 Shūdra mother.

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The marriage is at present arranged by the families of the young people. The family of the young man approaches the family of a girl who is considered a suitable match and after much discussion arrangements are made; the girl is informed of them and in most cases she acquiesces. The authority of the family is ideally supreme. Young people have many opportunities of meeting, or at least of seeing one another, and as we should expect, matches that are not likely to be durable are tacitly avoided by the elders of the family. Cases are known however where a girl has refused the arranged marriage and for various reasons elder members of her family have agreed with her and prevented the marriage; cases are also known where a young man after suggesting for himself a particular girl and carrying with him most of the other members of his family has found opposition from an elderly female member who disapproves of the girl and he has had to give up his idea. Life in a joint family, as is well known in other parts of India, is a matter of the adjustment of conflicting stresses. The evidence of the marriage song seems to show that at some time in the past a young man went out himself to look for a suitable girl and settled the matter himself, without reference to his family until the time for the formal arrangement arrived. There is probably some historical truth in the account, but the period at which this was the custom is not known. Richter's account of 1870 implies, though it does not mention explicitly, a state of things like that at the present day.

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When a marriage is to be formally arranged and fixed, the aruvē<sup>1</sup> of the young man's family accompanied by representatives of this family, e.g. the man's father, his elder brother, or a brother-in-law, go to the house of the girl's family. There they meet the aruvē and the representatives of the girl's family. Formally the man's party declare that he will marry the girl and the girl's party that they will give the girl, and the aruvēs guarantee that their respective parties will hold to the agreement. The ceremony is performed in the nellaki of the house, i.e. the portion of the central hall opposite the door, where a lamp hangs. It is regarded as the sacred part of the house and apparently the sanctity centers in the lamp, before which prayers are offered in the evening to the ancestors of the sib (or nowadays to any other gods in addition). Most of the ceremonies to be described

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<sup>1</sup> Two sibs stand in mutual relationship to one another, so that each provides an aruvē for the other on certain ceremonial occasions. Their duties in connexion with marriages are described in the text. At a funeral the aruvē is present and seems to have been originally entrusted with supervision of the ceremonial. At present the office tends to become a mere formality and the aruvē does not necessarily come from the traditional sib. The man of the traditional sib is called mannaruvē 'land-aruvē'; one who is engaged for the occasion only is ponnaruvē 'gold-aruvē' and this term seems to carry with it some derogatory connotation.

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[515] wives, but not his brothers' wives, unless they are much older  
[602] than himself,<sup>1</sup> must pour over him one pot of water each. After  
this he is arrayed in full Coorg dress, including the turban, dagger,  
and sword, and puts on heavy bangles and neck-chains. His  
long coat (kupia) should be white, as all such garments were  
[515] anciently. The bride likewise is bathed by women and girls  
[602] from among her relatives, no one being barred from this office  
[292] except widows. She is dressed in her best sari and headcloth and  
[301] decorated with a great number of ornaments, toe and finger  
rings, earrings, necklaces and chains, and hair-ornaments.  
When the guests have all arrived in the early morning (all wearing  
Coorg dress, though the men need not wear white coats), the  
[292] bride and groom in their respective houses are brought forth  
into the nellaki. Each is wearing in addition to their full dress  
a cloth over the head, the bride's covering her face but left un-  
fastened in front. Each, conducted by a near relative or friend  
of the same sex (in the man's case frequently the husband of his  
sister, in the woman's the wife of her brother), circles three times  
in clockwise direction a stool between two standing lamps and  
then is seated facing to the east on the stool, which has been  
[342] covered with a cloth. The nellaki was anciently the place for the  
[778] ceremony; at present it often takes place in the yard of the house  
[171] in a pandal built for the occasion and fitted with the stool and two  
[533] standing lamps, but not with a hanging lamp. This shift of  
scene is due to the fact that the house is frequently too small to  
accommodate all the guests. During the ceremony four Coorg  
musicians beat on drums and sing the wedding song (this I hope  
to present and discuss linguistically elsewhere).
- [614] When the central figure of the ceremony is seated, his or  
her mother, or if the mother is dead or a widow, the eldest  
married woman in the sib who is not a widow, stands in front  
[682] of him or her. She takes from a large flat plate of rice a handful  
and throws some first to the hanging lamp, apparently as an  
offering to the ancestors of the sib (if the ceremony is outside in  
the pandal, this is omitted), then over her head towards the sib;

[607] <sup>1</sup> Younger ones are said to be restrained by shyness, but the fact is  
that they are women who are referred to as macini and are possible spouses  
of the man, in case they should be widowed and he should become a widow-  
er. Such relatives of a man, viz. all those whom he classes as macini  
and mammi, whether they are blood-relations (i.e. cross-cousins) or re-  
lated merely by marriage, are the subjects of taboos with relation to  
him. They begin to operate when both parties have attained puberty.  
They may not touch one another, except in case of real necessity, nor  
may they sit on the same bench. Other specific taboos operating between  
[605] these cross-cousins seem to be lacking, since in general Coorg men and  
[834] women observe about the same taboos in speech and action that are  
observed in polite circles in western society. The specific taboos do not  
operate between any other classes or relatives; it may be observed that  
the taboo on touching is merely a very small extension of the usual reluc-  
tance of a Coorg man to touch a woman.

## COORG TRIBES AND CASTES

- 342 door leading into the inner hall which is lit by the skylight formed by the junction of the four slopes of the inner roof into an inner space (mittam) which is a masonry reservoir in which rain water is collected and drained off by an underground passage. The inner roof is supported on four pillars, resting on thick board slabs of jackwood upon the walls of the reservoir, and forming convenient seats for the inmates of the house, the inner rooms of which are without windows and open by small doors into the central hall only. On the side diagonally opposite to the door of the verandah, and likewise on the inner right corner, there are two doors leading to the exterior of the house. The first room of the house is occupied by the master of the house and his wife. The next room is the kitchen-dining room whence the smoke issues and fills the hole house, coating and preserving the woodwork. The small rooms of the remaining two wings are tenanted by the married couples, the widows and unmarried women. One room near the left corner is set apart as sacred to the family deity. From the ceiling are suspended match-locks, the wooden bells for cattle, the trappings of pack bullocks, and other domestic utensils. The space under the roof and above the wooden ceiling, which is covered with a thick layer of earth to keep the rooms below dry and fireproof, serves for storing bags of rice, baskets, pots and culinary provisions. There is also a deep well built with stone in the compound to supply water for cooking purposes, and another hut by the side of the paddy fields for bathing in hot water.
- [77d]
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- 352 The simplicity of the habits of the Coorgs is reflected in the furniture that they use. Wooden cots are generally used, with straw, coir, or cotton mattresses and cushions, sheets, and blankets; on the floor, they have coarse mats for rubbing their feet before going to bed. Occasionally they use wooden stools. A wooden shelf is fixed to the wall in each room to keep their brass vessels, plates and lamps. Rattan or wooden boxes contain their clothing and jewels. There is always a spittoon in one corner of the room. [415] Where there is a baby, a rattan cradle is suspended from the ceiling within [P54] reach of the mother's bed. Young Coorgs of the present day have better [77] houses and good furniture as also comfortable arrangements in the European style.

## Internal Structure

- 619 The Coorgs are composed of four endogenous groups. Amma, Sanna, Malla and Boddu Coorgs. The Amma and Sanna Coorgs are found in all parts of Coorg. The Malla and Sanna Coorgs are united and are no longer distinguishable. They form the principal class of Coorgs.

## Exogamy

- 614 The Coorg clans are too many to mention. Most of them are their local house names. Some are alien. Marriage within the clan is prohibited.

[PC4]

## CHAPTER XI

## AMMA COORG

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[162] THE Amma Coorgs belong to the indigenous priesthood of Coorg. They numbered 666 in the Census of 1931, 336 being males and 330 females. Their common name is Amma Kodaḥ, which would naturally signify Coorgs devoted to the worship of Amma or the goddess of the chief river of the country, the Cauvery. The Brahmans invented a mythical origin which is not in accord with the Cauvery Purana.

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As reward for his austerities the sage Kaveri was blessed with a daughter, Kaveri, who was proposed to be given in marriage to Aḡastya, another sage who resided on the Brahmagiri. Kaveri did not accept the proposal. She assumed the shape of a river and fled from the mountain. Aḡastya in hot pursuit overtook her at Kadianad and persuaded her to submit their dispute to the arbitration of their friends. They called three families of Amma Kodaḥs and six of Coorgs. The former sided with Aḡastya and the latter with Kaveri. The Amma Kodaḥs decided that Kaveri should not be allowed to go. The Coorgs said that a woman should not be forced to marry against her will. This provoked Aḡastya, who pronounced a curse that the generation of Coorgs should become less, that their women should not tie their garments in front, that the sown rice should not grow, and that their cows should not give milk. But Kaveri Amma who was the patroness of the Coorgs counteracted the curse as well as she could, and said, "The Coorgs shall increase, but the Amma Coorgs decrease, the Coorg women shall tie their garments behind; the sown paddy shall be transplanted, the cows shall be milked after the calves have drunk". So saying, she tried to escape and on being held by Aḡastya by the border of her garment, she turned to the right and flowed rapidly away. Hence the place where this occurred is called Balamuri (turning to the right). A linga was erected at the spot by the Brahmans. It is yearly visited in the month of November at the time of the Kaveri feast by Coorgs and others, who bathe in the river. Dodda Vira Rajendrar built here a rest-house, which, though built a century ago, is in tolerable preservation. Nothing more is known about the real history of the Amma Coorgs, but a few facts may be given as evidence that they are the remains of an ancient priesthood.

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The Amma Coorgs observe in common with the Coorgs the great festivals of the country, and act as priests. They dress like Coorgs and at the same time wear the holy thread. It seems that they inclined towards the

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231 cription might be reared on sound farming principles. As it is, the cattle of Coorg are of a mediocre breed, better in the north and east, worse in the centre and south-west. The [439] Coorgs procure their cattle partly from Mysore, partly from the annual fair at Subramanya. The ryots have generally too great a number of them, to which they cannot properly attend, and it is not to be wondered, that there is almost annually a great mortality amongst the cattle from what the Coorgs call dodda rôga i. e. great disease, the cattle refusing food and being frequently purged, gantlu-kattu i.e. throat swelling disease and the kálu-jwara or foot-sore disease. The [578] increasing coffee cultivation of late years has somewhat limited the pasturage and the constant cattle trespass on coffee plantations is a cause of much vexation and loss, both to planters and ryots. The Coorgs, like other Hindoos, hold the cow sacred; it is a sort of sentimental veneration for the animal which ploughs the fields and, motherlike, gives milk; but does not prevent them from inflicting cruelty upon the sacred beast by ill use, neglect and starvation. The slaughter of kine within the limits of the Coorg Province was distinctly prohibited by General Fraser on the assumption of the administration in the following terms:

To

Lieutenant C. F. Le HARDY,

*Superintendent of Coorg.*

Sir,

Having ascertained, that it is highly offensive to the religious feelings of the people of Coorg, that cows or bullocks should be killed for the purpose of being used as an article of food, I request, that you will be so good as to prohibit this

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practice throughout the whole district by any person whether European or native.

J. S. FRASER, *Id. Col.*  
and Commissioner.

Mercara, 16th January 1835.

Whether the sanction of the Government of India was obtained to this prohibition is not apparent, but the Coorgs have always, up to this time, regarded it as binding on the British Government; and, under these circumstances, we must await the dissipation by education of existing prejudices on the subject on the part of the people.

Not venerated like the cow is the bison (*Can. kádi*; *Bos cavifrons*) which is killed by the Coorgs without hesitation; its flesh, however, is only eaten by the lowest classes. It lives in herds throughout the thickest forests and in the highest hills, especially in Marenád and Hormalnád. The male stands nearly 6 feet high at the shoulder, but disproportionately low behind, and reaches the length of 9 feet from nose to root of tail; the tail itself is almost 3 feet long. Its hump is rather small. When young, the colour of the bison is of a dark reddish hue, which changes with age into a greyish black, the belly, legs as far as the knee-joint, breast and face being, however, of a dirty, whitish tinge. The whole body, especially the dewlap, is covered with long hair and the eyes are of a light blue colour. The horns are short and thick at the base, but gradually become thinner, leaving the tips small and sharp; they are remarkable for the symmetry of their curvature, take a fine polish and the fortunate sportsman may be proud of the trophy. The hide, which is very thick, is used for covering shields. Naturally timid and of retiring habits, preferring shady woods to open glades, except in the cooler parts of the day, the bison, when alarmed or wounded, charges headlong with mad fury his imaginary or

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\* 136 serve to lead the curious upon the right track. The Cobra di capella or Hood Snake (*Naia tripudians*; *Kg. Nalla pámbu* = good snake, in the sense of *Eumenides*?) is more frequent in the bamboo than in the malle district, and often takes possession of an out-hill for its habitation, but also deserted huts and the thick thatch of out-houses are its favourite haunts. It is kept and worshipped in demon temples and sometimes in rooms to guard treasure. In a specimen 5 feet long just examined, the hood which is formed by the expanded skin of the neck, when the snake is excited, measured 7 inches in length and 4½ in breadth. It is whitish in front and black on the lower part of the back, shading off into brown and white towards the flattened head; in the middle of the hood there is a peculiar mark resembling a pair of spectacles with the bridge downward, the frame being white and the space of the imaginary glasses black. Before an attack the cobra half raises its coiled body into a graceful curve, dilates its hood and swaying to and fro, its bifid tongue quivering all the while, it keeps its victim spell bound with its fiendish brilliant eyes, till it darts forward and hissing inflicts its deadly wound. In spite of the most strenuous exertions of science, combined with benevolence, no infallible remedy has yet been discovered against the bite of the cobra, and all the boasted native charms have proved worthless, though snake charmers have by their knowledge of the habits of the cobra and by the influence of the melancholy strain of their rude flageolet acquired a great power over the reptile.

The number of the poison fangs of this and all other venomous snakes, is but two, one in front of each side of the upper jaw, and they lie flat along the roof of the serpent's mouth, whilst at rest. The fangs are curved inside and as sharp as the finest needle, yet they are hollow and their root is in direct communication with the venom ducts behind them. In biting the same muscle that raises the fangs compresses

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527 On the following morn-  
 224 ing the youths assemble for a hunt in the forest, belonging to the village. Whatever game is brought down, is divided by the hunters in the following manner: the man who has killed the animal, receives a hind-quarter and the head, the rest belongs to the company. This day is followed by a great hunt of the whole Nádu, a repetition of the village-hunt, on a larger scale. The Keilmárta, to the taste of young Coorg, is the most glorious of all the festivals.

### 5. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND POPULAR SUPERSTITION.

The previous description of familiar and popular Coorg life would be incomplete without an account of other *religious observances*, if such a name may be given to the lowest degree of superstitions, which take the place of the worship of God among this rude race.

#### a. The sanctuaries of a Coorg community.

Instead of a general description, a short sketch of the village "Arméri" in Beppunád, the centre of Coorg life, may serve as a specimen.

- 778 Arméri numbers only 25 Coorg houses, but is richly pro-  
 177 vided with idol shrines. First a Bhagavati temple in charge of Brahmans. In connection with this kind of worship there is a Mahádéva temple, and two Lingas in the jungle, which receive regular púja. Also two sanctuaries of Ayappa (the Shani, Saturn Pán? of Hindu mythology) have Brahmans for priests. Ayappa (Lord) is quite naturalized among the Coorgs. He is the great forest-god, a mighty hunter, to whom models in clay of dogs, horses and tigers are offered in abundance. In these observances the whole community joins under the superintendence of Brahmans. There are besides six places in which Chámundi or Raktéshvari (names for Párvati, Shiva's

wife) is worshipped once a year, when pigs are sacrificed.—  
This is, of course, an abomination to the Brahmana.

**b. Ancestral and Demon worship.**

The principal place in Coorg-idolatry is held by the worship of the dead. Every family offers a sacrifice to its departed ancestors once a year, during the two months preceding the monsoon. A fowl, generally a cock, is killed, upon a stone devoted to the Káranas, somewhere in the jungle-land belonging to the family estate. (Kárana is the name given to the heads of families whether living or dead.) Seven of the Arméri houses, however, have little temples where *Kóla* or *Báraní* is annually performed. *Kóla* is the name of a sacrifice connected with demoniacal dancing, *Báraní*, of a sacrifice to the dead without the dances. These temples consecrated to the worship of the dead are called *Keimada*. *Mada* is the Coorg word for Matha, a religious building. The meaning of the word "kei" may possibly stand for Kárana, or simply denote: near, at hand, private. The Ptjáris (officiating priests) employed in these ceremonies are Malayálas long since naturalized in Coorg, Panika, Maleya, Banna men, subordinate to the Kanyas, the hereditary Malayálam astrologers of Coorg. At the Kólas they beat drums and sing verses in commemoration of the ancestors. Those who are to be possessed by the spirits, wear masks and buckle on swords. As they sing of the deceased father, or grandfather, or other ancestor, his spirit seizes them and they speak as his mouthpieces. To each spirit a sacrifice is offered, a cock and a bottle of spirits, which his representative drinks, thus fortifying himself for future exertion during the night. The ceremony begins after sunset, in the presence of the whole village-community, and is continued until morning. About seven or eight o'clock in the morning pigs are sacrificed. The head of one of the pigs belongs to the performers, the

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the occasion a large concourse of people, chiefly Sivácharica, 769  
collect round the tombs, to pay their respects; or, at any rate,  
to participate in the liberal charity, dispensed at the time from  
the Government Treasury.

The people of Coorg have also great faith in a certain  
*Kaliatanda Ponnappa* or simply *Kaliat-Achchappa*, the spirit  
of a Malayálam man, who came to Coorg, many generations  
ago, was naturalized, married a Coorg-woman, and established  
himself at Náiknád. He was a great magician, and long the  
dread of the Coorgs. At last he was shot near the Cutchéri  
of Náiknád taluq. Since his death his spirit has possessed 787  
men, who give themselves to the strange arts that he practised.  
A similar worship is still maintained in honor of Achannik  
in Chickamunddru in Kiggatnád.

Higher even than *Kaliat-Achchappa*, in the estimation of 776  
all Coorg, stands a certain female devil, at Kutta, called 782  
*Kuttadamma*. Kutta lies at the borders of the Wynád. Kutta-  
damma has no temple. The sanctuary is under a tree in the 778  
forest. The Pújári is a young man, the only person left of 793  
the family, which has engaged in this worship. Large sums  
of money are annually sent thither by people from all parts  
of Coorg. Many vows are paid to Kuttadamma in behalf of  
sick people or of the dead. And whether a sick person recover  
or die, the sum vowed for his recovery must be paid; or woo  
to the living! Liberal presents are also given to the man in 793  
charge of Kuttadamma, to engage her services against enemies,  
who, they say, are distressed or destroyed altogether by the  
demon, in answer to the prayers of her priest.

Each Báno (parcel of grass or forest-ground) has a presid-  
ing divinity, to which an annual sacrifice of pork and cakes  
is offered. If this sacrifice be not made, or not properly per- 825  
formed, the *Kádderaru* (the tending god, i. e. the god watching  
over the cattle) will withdraw his favour, and sickness and  
death among the cattle will ensue.

• 778 Besides the many groves set apart in each Nád for some object of worship, but chiefly for *Ayappa-dévaru*, there are some extensive forests, called *Dévara-kádu*, which are untrod- den by human foot and superstitiously reserved for the abodes or hunting grounds of deified heroic ancestors. These forests are: the *Iggudappa-dévara-kádu* in Pádinalknáđ, the *Chóma- male* in Katiednáđ and the *Iruli-báns* in Kuyingherináđ.

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[791] Another annual sacrifice every house has to offer to a peculiar divinity called *Gulika*. This is an invisable constel- lation or star, belonging both to the order of planets and to that of the zodiacal stars (it is, as the people say, a son of Shani or Saturn). No mortal eye sees it. The astrologer only knows the *Gulika* and its pówer, especially over the sick. A stone is placed for the *Gulika* at the foot of some tree possessed of a milky juice. There the Coorg offers every year fowls, cocoanuts and a little brandy in a dish of plantain- leaves to his tutelary numem. In cases of frequent deaths in a family, a second *Gulika*, called *Mrityu-Gulika* (death- gulika) is worshipped.

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[753] Another object of solemn ceremonies are the *Nátas*, the spots on which cobra capellas have finished their course of terrestrial life. According to Coorg lore, the cobra capella <sup>2</sup> lives a thousand years! When it has passed the meridian of its long life, its body begins to shrink and to brighten, till it shines like silver, and measures three feet or less at the age of six or seven hundred years. Still later, the reptile shines like gold, and is only one foot in length. At last it shrinks to the size of a finger. Then it will some day fly up high into the air, die and sink down upon the ground, where it disappears altogether. No man sees it, but, of course, the Kanya knows the important secret, which he will communi- cate for a consideration to the proprietor of the land. Should any human being, unawares, set foot upon the hallowed spot, incurable disease of the skin will break out upon his person, <sup>2</sup> [Errata: This should read "Cobra di Capella" See Corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 493, -- Analyst]

and the poor wretch will rot away by degrees. To prevent such disasters, the Náta place is marked by a little stone enclosure. During the month of Scorpio (November—December) a lamp is lighted every evening to the Náta, and cocoanuts are offered as oblations.

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### c. Astrology and Sorcery.

The ministers of Coorg superstition, the Kanyas, Panikas, Maleyas and Bannas make a handsome livelihood. The Kanyas find much work for the conjuring confraternity, dependent, in a great measure, upon their friendly patronage. The Kanya (astrologer) has complete mastery over the minds and, to a great extent, over the pockets of the credulous Coorgs. For a consideration in the shape of a purse of rupees, he writes the horoscope of the individuals who apply to him. Such is his cleverness, that he requires only to know the name of a person, in order to calculate the year, month, day and hour of his nativity. He is also the oracle of the Coorgs in cases of sorcery and witchcraft. It is believed by the Coorgs, that misfortunes, such as diseases of men or cattle, and deaths in the family or the herd, rarely come upon them in the natural order of things. The knowledge of an all-ruling Providence seems to have no place in their minds. Every severe affliction or great loss is ascribed to magic art or "an enemy hath done this." To find out the author of the mischief, and to induce or force him to keep the peace, is the only method that suggests itself to such people for obtaining deliverance from trouble. Application is made to some famous Kanya, who consults his books and caudies (little shells used for dice), and discovers the secret enemy's place, house, stature, age, etc. The man is called before a Pancháyat, and the case is discussed in the Parpatigára's Cutchéri. If things are not settled before this tribunal, the parties go to the Subadar, and frequently the quarrel is carried before the

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788 here with firm grasp a husband drags his timid spouse along  
 783 the rock and into the caldron; and even the tender babe at  
 his mother's breast is brought within the influence of the bath.  
 Dripping and shivering the bathers force their way back  
 through the new arrivals and seek a sunny spot to change  
 their garments. The pressure is great, the path slippery,  
 and the confusion and pressure<sup>2</sup> alarming. According to  
 [177] Brahminical superstition the colour of the water in the cal-  
 [823] dron indicates the intensity of the guilt of the bathing pil-  
 grim. The darker its hue the greater the guilt, and yet the  
 phenomenon depends only on the accident, whether the fall-  
 ing water<sup>1</sup> is intercepted by the bodies of the bathers or whether  
 it reaches the basin directly, and by the force of its fall is  
 beaten into foam.

788 After bathing the pilgrims assemble at about 4 o'clock in  
 793 the temple, where a Brahmin dances before the idol shrine  
 798 with a brass image of Isvara upon his head; another Brahmin  
 177 with a plate receives the small money offerings, and a third  
 distributes Prasāda i. e. flowers and globules of sandal. The  
 native officials first make their obeisance, the most devoted  
 amongst them even the Śāshtāngam i. e. touching the ground  
 with the 8 members of the body, and then offer their gift.  
 This temple possesses 2,000 batties of rice-land and annually  
 receives on this festive occasion Rupees 400 from Govern-  
 788 ment! The origin of Irpu and Hérumālu-jātre is based upon  
 798 a common Brahminical legend:—One day when Rāma, with  
 177 his followers, was living in this place, his younger brother  
 539 Lakshmana in a fit of madness insulted him by returning the  
 bow and arrows which Lakshmana some time before had re-  
 ceived from Rāma. Repenting of his rashness, Lakshmana  
 asked forgiveness, offering at the same time to throw himself  
 into a large fire as an expiation for his crime. He shot an  
 arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks, when a large fire  
 flared up into which he threw himself. In order to save his

<sup>2</sup> [Errata: the words "and pressure" should  
 be omitted. See corrigenda, cat. 116,  
 p. 493 -- ANALYST]

brother, Rāma immediately created a river, which up to the present day is called Lakshmanatirtha, but it was too late. Rāma afterwards desired to consecrate the spot and ordered Hanuman to bring a Linga from Kāsi (Benāres) within one hour and a half. During his absence Rāma, fearing that Hanuman would not be back in time, made a Linga himself of river-sand, in which operation he was surprised by Hanuman, who flew into a rage for having troubled himself in vain. He twisted his enormous tail round one of the neighbouring hills, *Hanumanbetta*, and attempted to upset it. Rāma, to comfort the furious monkey-god, assured him that Hanuman's Linga should become even more famous than his own. So the new Linga was set up at Hérumālu and the festive day of its worship precedes that of the Linga at Irpu!

In April and December there are jātres to the *Iggudoppakundu* in Padināknād, where Tulu-Brahmins have a temple and receive the oblations of the Coorgs. It often happens, that a sick Coorg vows his weight in rice to that temple, and, no doubt, the heavier the man the more acceptable and effective the gift!

On the *Hattur hill* or *Kuntala-betta* in Betiednād there is an annual jātre in honor of Isvara or Siva who has there a little stone-temple dedicated to him. In 1853 the dilapidated temple was rebuilt at the expense of the Takkas and headmen of Betiednād and their names are written on a stone slab in the temple, which is only 15 feet square, but substantially built with a Linga in front. It stands near the brink of the precipice which is about 500 feet deep and whence a beautiful view is obtained over Kiggatnād. There is also a remarkable stone on the very edge of the precipice about 2 feet broad and 5 feet long, where childless or unmarried people bring offerings of betel leaves, perform worship and turn three times round, believing that this ceremony will insure issue to the barren woman, or a suitable partner to the unmarried youth.

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On the north side, a little below the temple, there is a small tank with perennial water, which is considered holy, but 100 years ago it is said to have been defiled by a Chándála woman bathing in it, when the spring ceased to flow for some time.

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On the south-east ridge a cave is shown which, according to Brahminical discovery, offered an asylum to the exiled Pándus! After their departure the cave was occupied by a tiger, which with due respect for the játre quits his abode 7 days before the feast and afterwards returns.

On the precipitous side of the rock there are nests of vultures and several hundreds of beehives.

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For seven days before the Tulásankramana in the village Mugutagéri at the foot of the hill, the ryots assemble one from each house at the Mandu and sing Coorg chants in praise of Isvara. On the night of the 7th the inhabitants of the whole nád come together, disguising themselves in masks of 18 various descriptions, they then go to the Ambala and dance and sing to the sound of the tomtom. The day following a light hollow frame, representing a horse, made of cane-work, is decked out so as to hide the lower part of the man's body who carries it, making it appear as if he rode the horse. The multitude then ascend the hill in procession, headed by the horse and a band of musicians, dance round the temple and bring their offerings of water, fruit and money.

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The Pálár játre in Knyingherinád in honor of Pálarappa, brother of Iggudappa, is a similar affair, which takes place in the month of April. The temple was rebuilt only a few years ago at a considerable expense and chiefly by the exertions of a Coorg official whose zeal and devotion one could wish had been employed in a better cause, especially in the education of his ignorant and superstitious nád people!

Amongst the játres beyond this country those visited by the Coorgs are four: *Subramanya* on the northern frontier of Coorg, which, in December, attracts a great number of people,

as with the feast there is connected a cattle-fair and the sale of superior metal vessels and idols; *Baitur* in Malabar to which in January chiefly the people of Beppunád and Yedenalknád proceed, they also send rice to the temple; *Payavur* also in Malabar, and especially supported and in February visited by the Katiednád-Coorgs, who send from one to ten butties of rice per house; *Nanchanagódu* in Mysore which comes off in December. 788

#### 1. Dévastánas, Mattas and Muajida.

The Coorg Dévastánas or Pagodas are mostly of an insignificant character; none is distinguished for great antiquity or structural beauty; most of them are but rude village shrines of mud walls and thatched roofs within a gloomy grove and not calling for any particular description. A passing notice may be, perhaps, bestowed on the *Omkarésvara-dévastána* at Mercara, which stands in a hollow just below the Superintendent's Court and is built in the same style as the Rajahs' tomba, but with a small tank in the temple yard. From the centre of the tank a pretty little pavilion rises, which is connected with the land by a balustrated passage. The priests or pújaries of these places are chiefly Tulu, Havige and Karnátaka-Brahmins; the former are divided into 3 branches: the Kótu, Kandávara, and Shivalli-Brahmins, which latter are the most numerous in Coorg. The Havige-Brahmins are Smártaru, residing near Honore in North Canara whose native tongue is Canarese. They worship both Vishnu and Siva, and the marks on their foreheads are put horizontally. The Karnátaka-Brahmins are immigrants from Mysore. 793  
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There are altogether 863 pagodas or temples in Coorg and 57 Mattas or Jangams, of the total of which places 549 share a Government contribution of 13,800 Rupees annually in cash and 9,474 Rupees worth of remitted assessment from endowed landed property; 372 places only are maintained by 778  
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<sup>1</sup> [Errata: This should read "Omkarésvara-dévastána." See corrigenda, Cat. 116, p. 473--Analyst]

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659 private contributions. The lion's share of this large Government grant falls to the Mercara-Omkarésvara temple with Rupees 4,850, to the Bhágiamandala-dévastána with Rupees 3,956; to the Tale-Kávéri pagoda with Rupees 2,320 and to the Rajahs' tombs with Rupees 2,000 per annum—a total of Rupees 13,126! When the people once see the folly of their superstitious idolatry, what an amount of spiritual good for themselves and their children they may effect with these large sums, should Government continue its liberality!

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659 The *Mattas* or *Jangams* are religious institutions, originated and endowed by the Coorg Rajahs, who were themselves Lingaites. They are now evidently of greater importance to the Siváchára-priests, who derive an easy living from the rich endowments, than of any practical use for the Coorg people, amongst whom this sect, in spite of its royal patronage, never struck any root. The Sivácháries are easily recognised by the silver capsule, enclosing the Linga, which they wear suspended round their necks. The 57 Mattas hold as endowments 31,457 batties of land, representing an annual revenue of 3,360 Rupees due to Government, if the land were held (659) by ryots. Government, therefore, contributes not only that amount of revenue, but also the actual produce of the fields less the working expenditure.

The most richly endowed Mattas are the following:—

|                               |              |                             |                         |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bassava-hally Matta           | in Yedavanád | with 4,105 batties of land, |                         |
| Abbi                          | do.          | do. 4,005                   | do.                     |
| Madapur                       | do.          | Gadinád do. 2,643½          | do.                     |
| Siddapur                      | do.          | Horurnurocklenád 2,372½     | do.                     |
| Thanady                       | do.          | Amatnád with 1,485          | do.                     |
| Chadadarally                  | do.          | Horurnurocklenád 1,430      | do.                     |
| Cheppada Katte                | do.          | Yedenálknád with 1,188½     | do.                     |
| Thorenur                      | do.          | Gadinád do. 1,100           | do.                     |
| their endowments amounting to |              |                             | 18,330 batties of land. |

*Muajids*.—There are but 5 small Muajids in Coorg, erected by the Mussulmans residing here, whose number does not much exceed one thousand. They are mostly poor people and live chiefly in Mercara, Virájet and Fraserpet.

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g. The Amma-Codagas.

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In connection with the preceding subjects, it is natural, to enquire into the condition of the indigenous priesthood. It is clear, that the present intermixture of Hinduism with the more simple religious practices of the Coorgs points back to a time, when the encroaching Brahmins had to encounter popular superstition, upheld by an indigenous priesthood, whose direct descendants the present "Amma-Codagas" seem to be. In language, manners and costume they are hardly to be distinguished from other Coorgs, but are less favoured in appearance; many of them wear the brahminical cord, and all abstain from animal food and fermented liquor. They intermarry with their own people only, a custom which may perhaps hasten their gradual diminution and total extinction, as they constitute but a small portion of the whole population. There are altogether 42 Amma-Codaga houses with 281 inhabitants of whom 97 are men, 90 women and 94 children. They live chiefly in Kiggatnád and Padinálnád, 21 families in the former and 16 in the latter taluq. Like the other Coorgs they are agriculturists and only 3 are in Government service. Their name "Amma-Codaga" or Mother-Coorgs i. e. Coorgs belonging to Mother Kávéri denotes them as men devoted to Kávéri or as priests. With the rest of the Coorg tribe they celebrate in the same manner the great Kávéri and Huttari festivals, but of course as priests performing pñja in their own houses, for they have nothing to do with the Kávéri temple. They have no sacred books or shastras, nor do they exercise any spiritual influence over the people. The history of the old Coorg-priests is shrouded in obscurity. They seem

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712 8 feet thick and outside from 15 to 20 feet high with parapets 2 feet thick and 5 feet high. The fortress is an irregular hexagon and nearly conforms to the shape of the hill top, leaving enough space for a ditch all round and on the north side for a glacis. At its 6 corners there are bastions and the whole is built of strong masonry. The entrance on the east is intricate and circuitous and guarded by 3 successive gates, which close in the space, that is now occupied by public buildings the Jail, the Taluq-Subadar's, the Assistant Superintendent's and the Superintendent's Courts with the local Treasury. On the left side of the third gate there is a shrine erected against the wall, dedicated to Ganapati, the lord of hosts, whose image is daily worshipped by a Brahmin and who gets the first offerings, flowers and coconuts by Hindu devotees, because all who wish to prosper should begin their undertaking in Ganésa's name, and in former days it was not so dangerous for a Coorg to present himself before the Rája, as it is now before the British Superintendent! The fantastic superstructure has been added about 20 years ago by a devoted mistry who had been engaged in the building of the Fraserpet-Bridge, and who must have made large profits, to spend his money so lavishly. Within the fort itself, there is in the centre the palace, to the left and in front of it the English Church, to the right the Quarter-guard and armoury and behind the palace the powder magazine. The English Church stands near the place which was formerly occupied by a temple dedicated to Virabhadra and which was demolished in 1855 to make room for the Church. The latter was built by the Rev. A. Fennell in 1856-57 by private subscriptions, the Church Building Society and Government assistance and consecrated in April 1858 by Bishop Dealtry. It is a remarkably neat structure in plain Gothic style, having a tower surmounted with a low spire. From its position and elevation it is a conspicuous object from whatever side Mercara

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Kávéri and a great number of other Dévasthânas and fine forests dedicated to sylvan gods, this division is the most unenlightened and uncivilised in Coorg. There are many jungle-people especially the Kâdu-Maratties, who live on Kumari-cultivation (vide p. 108) and one tribe in the forests of Tâvunnâd, the Kâdavas or Bodavas, whose women dress in Eve's fashion, but with the vanity of Eve's daughters change the leaves four times a day. The women never come out of the forest, only the men show themselves, covered with a coarse cloth. They are excellent marksmen with bow and arrow, and live on the chase, seldom working for hire. Their huts, which they frequently change, are of the rudest description, made of sticks and covered with Netti-Pai (leaves of the Netti palm). Nearly the whole population of Tâvunnâd consists of Tulu-gaudas; there and in Nâlkanâd Canarese is scarcely understood, the people speak Codagn, Tulu and Malayâlam.

The ryots in Kuyinkéri-nâd, chiefly influenced by the wealthy House of the Karanika, Kutteti Eyappa, are mostly Coorgs and much devoted to the Pâalur deity (vide p. 174). But here as elsewhere in this taluq, the love of gain or, perhaps, necessity seems to overcome the superstitious scruples of the ryots; the venerated dévara-kâdus (sacred jungles) which, having for ages remained intact, are generally the finest forests, are cautiously invaded by the natives' axe and planted with coffee; but to propitiate the fabled wrath of Pâalurappa, Iggutappa, Maletûmbirappa and Ayappa, the devoted planter pays from 8 As. up to 1 Rs. per Batti of coffee towards the worship of the despoiled sylvan deities; but with the disappearance of these sacred forests, the oblation will probably cease too!

Padinâlnâd-taluq, being skirted by the highest range of the Western Ghats with the broad based Tatiandamol, at the foot of which the Nâlkanâd-palace is built, is watered by the upper course of the Kávéri with its numerous tributaries.

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- 632 *Nápoklu* is the seat of the Taluq-Kacheri, but otherwise  
 [131] an insignificant place. It is 15 miles from Mercara and on  
 [877] the Rájah's road to Náلكánád Palace. It possesses a flourishing  
 Canarese School which will soon be enlarged into an  
 Anglo-Vernacular School.
- 635 *Yedenáلكánád-taluq* separates Kiggatnád from Mercara  
 and Padináلكánád-taluq. Its northern boundary is all along  
 [634] formed by the Kávéri. Within an area of 210 square miles,  
 [162] it contains 49 villages and one town. The population of its  
 three Náds amounts to 14,153 souls and amongst them 4,802  
 Coorgs, 7,314 other Hindus, 1029 Mussulmans and the rest  
 is made up of various classes. This taluq is considered as  
 the focus of Coorg life. Most of the leading Coorg families  
 reside here and as they resisted the temptations of the im-  
 poster Abhrambára in 1837, they came in for a large share  
 [243] of the Government rewards. It contains the most fertile  
 [245] paddy fields in Coorg and also extensive European and native  
 coffee-plantations. The Carnatic Coffee Company held here  
 • [778] large Estates. There are still fine forests on the Perambóti<sup>2</sup>  
 Ghat, and in Beppunád there is a dense Dévara-kádu, called  
 Kariárbana (blackest jungle,) the residence of Beyturappa,  
 which from superstitious fear is never entered by the natives.  
 In the eastern portion of Ammatnád there are still many  
 waste paddy fields. What in the same Nád is called the  
 "Bamboo-district," is remarkable for its luxuriantly growing  
 coffee-plantations, which, but for the devastations of the coffee-  
 [443] borer, would have been the most productive in Coorg. In  
 this locality a new market has been opened for the conveni-  
 ence of the numerous coolies and the place has been called  
*Cólepet* in honor of our late Superintendent Capt. R. A. Cole.  
 Another newly founded village in Ammatnád is Anandapur,  
 the first Protestant settlement of a Christian Holeya congre-  
 gation (1857).
- 632 The seat of the Taluq-Kacheri is at *Vírdjenderpet*, a  
 [131]<sup>2</sup> *Errata: This should read "Periambád;"*  
*See Corrigenda, Cat. II 6, p. 479 - Analyst)*